The

Works of George Berkeley

Vol. II

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The

Works of George Berkeley

D.D.; Formerly Bishop of Cloyne

Including his Posthumous Works

With Prefaces, Annotations, Appendices, and
An Account of his Life, by

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ALCIPHRON

OR THE MINUTE PHILOSOPHER

IN SEVEN DIALOGUES

CONTAINING AN APOLOGY FOR THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE CALLED FREE-THINKERS

'They have forsaken me the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.'—JER. ii. 13

'Sin mortuus, ut quidam Minuti Philosophi censent, nihil sentiam, non vereor ne hunc errorem meum mortui philosophi irrideant.'—CICERO

First published in 1732

EDITOR'S PREFACE

TO

ALCIPHRON

OR THE MINUTE PHILOSOPHER

ALCIPHRON, or, The Minute Philosopher, published in 1732, is the largest, and probably the most popular, of Berkeley's works. The narrowness of the philosophy of those who then claimed for themselves exclusively intellectual strength and comprehensiveness, under the name of 'free-thinkers,' is signified by its title. Alciphron, or the 'strong man' in his own conceit, is presented as a 'minute philosopher,' whose horizon is confined to data of sense, excluding from his universe of reality the spiritual or moral world and God, shown to be in reason the chief realities of all. The atheism of so-called free-thinkers is attributed to their confined intellectual vision; and its inconsistency with their claim to be the apostles of philanthropy is argued, on the ground that atheism withdraws the strongest motive to promote the common good, which is man's chief end as a reasonable being.

In these Dialogues we find ourselves in an atmosphere different from the earlier philosophical works of Berkeley. Here social idealism, latent in the earlier works, takes the place of the physical and metaphysical idealism

of the *Principles* and the *De Motu*. More than ten years have passed since the *De Motu* made its appearance. Berkeley was then on his way from Italy to Trinity College. The *Minute Philosopher* was prepared in his American home in Rhode Island, and was given to the world on his return to London, after he had essayed the most romantic missionary enterprise of modern piety. The work bears marks of the new direction in which his characteristic enthusiasm was drawn. He sees more clearly that men are not independent individuals: they are made for one another: the material world, as a system of sense-signals, enables them to make signs and have social intercourse, each recognising that he is part of a whole, to the common good of which he ought to contribute, and order his ways and actions suitably—if he would live 'according to nature,' in the high meaning of 'nature.'

In the *De Motu*, Berkeley was engaged in applying his New Principles to restrain mechanical science within due philosophical limits, as the interpreter of sense-presented signs of sensible realities; their active, responsible, and therefore ultimate Cause being beyond its ken, in data not of sense but of inner consciousness. It was virtually an inquiry into the meaning of natural or physical causation. But in *Alciphron* moral or personal causes, and their social relations, fill the view. His surroundings in the intervening years help to explain the change.

On his return from Italy in 1721, he found England depressed by the agitation and misery that followed the collapse of the South Sea project. He set himself with eagerness to devise practical ways of relief. The low tone of social morality shocked and distressed him. Perhaps his active imagination and eager temperament exaggerated the symptoms. He seemed to find in a supposed growth of atheistic freedom from religious restraints the chief cause of the social maladies. At first his anxiety found vent in the short *Essay towards preventing the Ruin of*

Great Britain, offered by him to the world before the end of 1721 ; the eloquent lamentation of a fervid social idealist, biographically important as a forecast of its author's career in middle life and after. It was the first symptom of practical endeavour to realise around him a state of society nearer to his own lofty ideal ; the Cassandra wail of a sorrowful prophet, who soon after turned his eye of hope to more distant regions. In one of his letters to Lord Percival, he tells that in the year after his return from Italy, he had made up his mind to spend the remainder of his life in Bermuda, in order to establish there a missionary college 'for promoting reformation of manners amongst the English in our Western Plantations, and for the propagation of the Gospel amongst the American savages.' The next seven years were largely given to negotiations and preparations with a view to exchanging life in an Old World of social decay for an American Utopia. In the interval he had been advanced to the Deanery of Derry. A multiplicity of affairs had arrested his pen, for in those ten years his only publication was the few pages of *A Proposal for the better supplying of Churches in our Foreign Plantations*, issued in 1725, and the *Verses on the prospect of Planting Arts and Sciences in America*.

In September 1728, devoted to this ideal, he sailed for Rhode Island, on his way to Bermuda, fortified by Sir Robert Walpole's promise of support. He there made a home for himself, named Whitehall, in which he lived for more than two years, but he never reached Bermuda. It was in this home that *Alciphron* was written, the issue of reading and meditation in the seclusion of the ocean-girt island, pictures of which so often appear on its pages. The opening sentences in the First Dialogue remind us of the disaster which befell the Bermuda project, after long waiting in Rhode Island. In other Dialogues we are carried to the alcove among the rocks on that magnificent coast, where he was accustomed to

study, after he had exchanged the society of men of letters in London and Paris for a solitude occasionally broken by unsophisticated missionaries in the New England Plantations, who travelled great distances to visit him. The subtle intellect which had worked out the *Principles* and the earlier *Dialogues*, enriched by experience of life in Europe and America, is found in *Alciphron* offering a philosophical vindication of religion, at a time when, according to Bishop Butler, it had come 'to be taken for granted that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious[1].' And this application of his New Principles to criticism of the 'minute philosophy' of his age, takes the form of Dialogues more fitted than any in English literature to recall the charm of Plato and Cicero.

Alciphron should be studied in the light of the history of English deism and free thought from Hobbes onwards; with Mandeville and Shaftesbury, who figure in the second and third Dialogues, and Collins more or less throughout, especially in view[2]. The account of the knowledge of God which man is intellectually capable of receiving, that was advocated by two Irish prelates, Archbishop King and Bishop Browne, should not be overlooked in connexion with the fourth Dialogue and the seventh.

Although *Alciphron* is Berkeley's most direct contribution to religious philosophy, it must be remembered that the moral inspiration of all his metaphysical works was the struggle—in the midst of which he lived—between those who sought to exclude and those who sought to retain faith in God, as the foundation and motive of human life. The questions raised by English deists and atheistical free-thinkers of his time were for him the living form of

[1] See Butler's *Analogy*—Advertisement. The *Analogy* was published in 1736.

[2] See Lechler's *Geschichte des Englischen Deismus*. (Stuttgart, 1841.)

the perennial struggle between Faith and Scepticism. Moral reaction against materialism had spread the glow of earnest human feeling over his earlier treatises, which were intended to illustrate 'the incorporeal nature of the Soul, and the immediate Providence of Deity in opposition to Sceptics and Atheists.'

There is a greater appearance of learning in *Alciphron* than in Berkeley's earlier works. Authorities are more frequently cited, ancient as well as modern, and allusions are spontaneous and abundant that indicate greater familiarity with literature, and more extensive observation of the world. The appeals to imagination, in the form of rural pictures, are bold and striking, and in parts the work has the charm and sentiment of a pastoral poem.

In March 1732, very soon after Berkeley's return from America, the first edition of *Alciphron* was published in Dublin, with the *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* appended, 'printed for G. Risk, G. Ewing, and W. Smith, booksellers in Dame Street,' and in London, 'printed for J. Tonson, in the Strand': a second London edition followed later in the same year. Each of these editions was in two volumes: the first contained Dialogues I–V, and the second Dialogues VI and VII, along with the *New Theory of Vision*. The title-page of the first volume presents in vignette the 'fountain of living waters,' and the 'balances of deceit' appear on the title-page of the second. These quaint characteristic engravings are here retained. A third edition of *Alciphron*, in one volume, was published in London in 1752 (the year before the author's death), as mentioned in an Appendix to the Oxford edition of the Collected Works. Its existence became known to me only when that edition was almost out of the press. Mr. Sampson has since drawn attention to the curious fact that a third edition exists in two forms, identical in date, but not in contents. One is a careless reprint

of the first edition, full of obvious errors, while the other contains a carefully revised text. A notable change in the third edition is the omission of what formed sections 5, 6, 7 in the Seventh Dialogue, directed against abstract general ideas. Does this omission mean that he had modified his early ardent Nominalism in advanced life? *Alciphron* has been frequently republished since Berkeley's death. Changes introduced by the author into the second and third editions, and afterwards omitted, seemingly by inadvertence, in the posthumous republications, are restored in the present edition.

A French version appeared at the Hague in 1734. It was the earliest translation of any of Berkeley's writings into a foreign language; *Siris* followed, at Amsterdam, in 1745, and in 1756 the *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* were translated into German.

The first American edition was published at Newhaven in 1803, with a Preface by Dr. Timothy Dwight, President of Yale College, who describes the author as 'one of the first philosophers of any age or country.'

The first of the seven Dialogues in *Alciphron* is introductory; the second and third are ethical; the fourth, on which the treatise turns, is an argument, founded on the New Theory of Vision, for the existence and universal Providence of God, indispensable to the vitality of virtue and the practice of morality; the three last discuss the individual and social utility of Christianity; the miraculous signs of its being a true revelation of God; and its involved mysteries, argued to be unreasonable objection to faith in its contents. Berkeley's ingenuity and fancy are employed in defending moral order against ethical theories founded on selfishness, like Mandeville's, or on taste, as he interpreted Shaftesbury's; while his own metaphysical philosophy is engaged for the support of theism, and in refutation of objections to its articulate

development in Christian form. The advantage to goodness of faith in a future life; the Active Intelligence which governs the universe that we enter when we become percipient; the sufficiency of evidence for the reasonable demands of faith, notwithstanding the mysteries of religion, are all presented in the light of ethical or metaphysical philosophy, and of experience of the world.

In the discussion, Alciphron (Strong-Mind) and Lysicles represent 'minute philosophy,' or 'free-thinking'; the former in its more intellectual aspect, and the latter as found among shallow men of the world who live for pleasure. Euphranor unfolds reason latent in religion, and Crito moderates in the debate. Dion, who personates Berkeley, is mostly a spectator.

In the First Dialogue, the party try to discover some general principles in which they can all agree. At the end of this Dialogue, Alciphron acknowledges that all beliefs found to be absolutely indispensable to the common weal must be principles that are *natural* to man. He had previously argued (sect. 9) that the sensual appetites and passions are the only genuine constituents of human nature; and that faith in God and in life after death has been artificially produced by education: those beliefs differ in different nations and ages; and a principle cannot be 'natural' to the human mind unless it appears in all men from birth (sect. 14). What genuine naturalness consists in, and by what marks it may be recognised, are accordingly discussed (sect. 14–16). Alciphron is obliged to allow that beliefs which fail to shew themselves upon our first entrance into the world, and which are only imperfectly developed, or not developed at all, in many men, may be latent in human nature. He grants at last to Euphranor that the proper measure of moral truths is their tendency to promote the good of mankind; and that, since men exist for one another, each should consider himself part of a social whole, to the common good of

which he is bound by the highest motives. So the question to be discussed in the Dialogues that follow resolves itself into this:—Has faith in Moral Order, Providence, and a Future Life, from which minute philosophers release themselves, a tendency to promote the highest good of mankind? Is it needed as true rationalism, for the full satisfaction of reason?

The Second Dialogue is intended to refute Mandeville, whose *Fable of the Bees*, with its maxim 'private vices are public benefits,' and its satire upon man, was in vogue at the time. Lysicles, the light-hearted worlding, represents Mandeville. Granting the principle already accepted that the good of society is the test of right action, are not the vices of individuals, he asks, universally useful? Are not virtue and faith in God, on the other hand, inconsistent with the general happiness? In the discussion of this question, the place of man in nature and the differences in kind among pleasures are considered, as well as the social injury done by indulgence in pleasures which degrade the individual below the true human ideal.

In the Third Dialogue, Alciphron, adopting Shaftesbury, reduces conscience to taste, enlarges upon the beauty of virtue, and disparages faith in a future life as a selfish and cowardly appeal to hope and fear. Against this Euphranor maintains that a sense of the beauty of goodness is inadequate for making us good, as man needs for this a stronger and more awe-inspiring motive than taste: the springs of action must be sustained by faith in the destiny of man under God. The Third Dialogue leads to the connexion between Morality and Religion.

But the true thinker asks for reason in the faith that God exists. The foundation and nature of this belief is, accordingly, discussed in the Fourth Dialogue, in which the whole argument concentrates. Here Euphranor introduces Berkeley's conception of the sensible world as a visible symbolism into the discussion, arguing (sect.

8–15) that, as the visible world is a sensible expression of Intelligence and Will, each man has the same *kind* of evidence that God exists which he has that a fellow man exists when he hears him speaking. The visible world is, accordingly, a Divine Language, which contains all the signs of a perpetually present God that human words do of a man when he is actually addressing us. And our knowledge of God, Crito maintains (sect. 19–21), is more than negative ; negative knowledge of God being practically useless. The reasoning here is opposed to analogical theories of Archbishop King, in his Sermon on *Predestination* (1709), and of Bishop Browne, in his *Answer* to Toland (1699), his *Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* (1728), and his *Analogy* (1733)[1]. We know God, Crito concludes, as a living Spirit, who is continually communicating with others in and through the symbolism of the visible world.

The three remaining Dialogues are a vindication of religion in its Christian form. In the Fifth Dialogue, Christianity is represented as proved by the experience of mankind to be the most useful and ennobling form of religious worship, socially elevating far above Greek and Roman and all other religions ; in the Sixth, it is argued in the faith of miracles, events reported in history with a probability sufficient to justify practical faith ; and, in the Seventh, as not necessarily incredible on account of the mysteries of Grace, Incarnation, Trinity, and Moral Agency, which are not more mysterious than those found at the root of natural science, and indeed of all human experience.

That Christian thinking is true free-thinking is the lesson of the *Minute Philosopher*: Christian Faith is

[1] The last of those works of Browne was published after the appearance of *Alciphron*, which he criticises. The theory, however, pervades the two earlier ones. King's analogical knowledge of God is criticised by Browne.

Wisdom in its highest form. Berkeley's *Alciphron* may rank with the *Analogy* of Butler, and the *Pensées* of Pascal, as memorable works of the eighteenth and the preceding century in the religious philosophy of Europe.

The *Minute Philosopher* was attacked soon after its appearance.

The Fourth Dialogue, along with its Theory of Vision, occasioned the *Letter from an Anonymous Writer*, in the *Daily Post Boy*, to which Berkeley replied in his *Vindication and Explanation of Visual Language*.

The attack upon the *Fable of the Bees*, in the Second Dialogue, called out Mandeville, whose *Letter to Dion, occasioned by his book called Alciphron* (1732), complains of misrepresentation, and takes refuge under cover of its own ambiguous principles[1].

A flippant attack upon the whole performance followed, in a tract entitled *Remarks on the Minute Philosopher: in a Letter from a Country Clergyman to his Friend in London.*

[1] Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* appeared in 1714, in the form of a short apologue in verse, called *The Grumbling Hive: or Knaves turned honest.* To these verses the author added long notes and illustrations under the name of 'Remarks.' He afterwards composed six dialogues in defence of his doctrine, and published the whole, in 1728, as a prose treatise in two volumes, entitled *The Fable of the Bees: or Private Vices Public Benefits.* One professed purpose of the book is to shew that selfishness, luxury, and lust, indulged to a certain extent, are the foundation and motive force of social prosperity; that the welfare of society is dependent on the immorality of its individual members. This the author tries to prove, by tracing to their consequences some examples of vicious actions. The original work excited popular attention, and was presented as a nuisance by the grand jury of Middlesex, in 1723. The Presentment states that books and pamphlets are published almost every week against religion and morality; which affirm fate, deny Divine Providence, and recommend luxury, avarice, sensuality, and other vices, as necessary to the public welfare. Mandeville, in his *Letter to Dion*, explains that he means merely, that vice often proves advantageous to the worldly interest of those who are guilty of it, and to the societies of which they are members. He died in 1733. Tennemann says that Berkeley's *Alciphron* is chiefly directed against Mandeville and Bishop Browne, but in fact only one of the Seven Dialogues is devoted to the moral heresies of the former, and a few sections in another to Browne.

The so-called 'Country Clergyman' was John, Lord Hervey, the 'Sporus' of Pope, a familiar figure at the Court of Queen Caroline, the inner life of which he has so vividly presented to us. Hervey objects to the employment of reasoning, especially subtle reasoning, in matters of faith, denies that Atheism is a characteristic of so-called free thinkers, charges Berkeley with misrepresenting the *Fable of the Bees*, and himself misrepresents the theory of 'Visual Language[1].'

Among other tracts due to *Alciphron*, there is a curious one, dated 'Near Inverness, August 1732,' in the form of a letter to a friend in Edinburgh, entitled *A Vindication of the Reverend D— B—y from the scandalous imputation of being the author of a late book, entitled 'Alciphron, or, the Minute Philosopher.'* To the *Vindication* are subjoined 'the predictions of the late Earl of Shaftesbury concerning the book, together with an Appendix, and an Advertisement[2].'

[1] The *Country Clergyman* sums up his *Remarks* as follows:—

'*First*, That, as the Minute Philosopher professes writing to the Free-thinkers of the present age, he should have left Atheism quite out of the question; because it is not the error of these times.

'*Secondly*, That if it were, he is likelier (by telling people *his* are the best arguments to prove a God) to make than to convert atheists.

'*Thirdly*, That metaphysics are an improper method to take for the support of Christianity; because, whatever is designed for common use should be levelled to common apprehension, and whatever is to be universally received ought to be universally understood.

'*Fourthly*, That as metaphysics are generally the most obscure of all writings, so his writings are the most obscure of all metaphysics.

'And *Lastly*, That, by his manner of handling every proposition, he always does one or other of these three things:—he either begs the question, by some arbitrary decision at the end of the dispute, which he had just as good a right to make at the beginning of it (as in the 16th section of the First Dialogue, and the 2nd of the Fifth); or he puzzles and perplexes the question so much that nobody can pick out any decision at all (as in his Visual Language); or else he inadvertently gives up the question, by some slip in the course of reasoning, which he can never afterwards retrieve.'

[2] For the 'predictions,' see Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, vol. III. pp. 291–296 (fifth edition, 1732), where he gives reasons 'for avoiding the direct way of *Dialogue*; which at present lies so low, and is used only now and then, in our party pamphlets, or new-fangled

The most important parts of *Alciphron* are so connected with Berkeley's conception of the material world, and that conception was so ill understood by his contemporaries, that the work obtained imperfect appreciation in contemporaneous criticism.

Soon after Berkeley's arrival in Rhode Island, he was visited by the Reverend Samuel Johnson, missionary of the Church of England at Stratford in Connecticut, an acute thinker, and a recent convert to Berkeley's Principles, which he regarded as the best philosophical support of religious faith. More than twenty years after his intercourse with Berkeley in Rhode Island, Johnson produced his *Elementa Philosophica*, 'printed by Benjamin Franklin, at Philadelphia,' in 1752. This little book consists of two parts—'*Noetica*, or things relating to the Understanding, and *Ethica*, or things relating to the moral behaviour.' It is dedicated to Berkeley, and adopts his philosophical principles[1].

At Rhode Island, besides successive visits of Johnson, Berkeley corresponded with him on questions of philosophical theology with which they were both engaged. As early as June 25, 1729, Berkeley wrote in reply to inquiries and difficulties of Johnson regarding his Immaterialism. The letter is biographically as well as philosophically interesting, and along with the letter which follows

theological essays. For of late Dialogue has been introduced into Church-controversy, with an attempt of raillery and humour, as a more successful method of dealing with heresy and infidelity. The burlesque-divinity grows mightily in vogue. And the cried-up answers to heterodox discourses are generally such as are written in drollery, or with resemblance of the facetious and humorous language of conversation.' So also vol. I. pp. 65–67, and vol. III. p. 6.—Warton, by the way, records the remark of Hurd, that there were only three Dialogues in English that deserved applause—the *Moralists* of Shaftesbury; Mr. Addison's *Treatise on Medals*; and the *Minute Philosopher* of Berkeley. See his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*.

The 'Advertisement' is a squib occasioned by Dial. V. sect. 22.

[1] This work is rarely found. I am indebted to Mr. Sibley, librarian of Harvard University, for a sight of it.

it, deserves a place among Berkeley's Works, especially in connexion with *Alciphron*, which was in preparation at the time they were written[1]. Here is the first letter:—

Reverend Sir,

The ingenious letter you favoured me with found me very much indisposed with a gathering or imposthumation in my head, which confined me several weeks, and is now, I thank God, relieved[2]. The objections of a candid thinking man to what I have written will always be welcome, and I shall not fail to give all the satisfaction I am able, not without hopes of convincing or being convinced. It is a common fault for men to hate opposition, and be too much wedded to their own opinions. I am so sensible of this in others that I could not pardon it to myself if I considered mine any further than they seem to me to be true; which I shall the better be able to judge of when they have passed the scrutiny of persons so well qualified to examine them as you and your friends appear to be, to whom my illness must be an apology for not sending this answer sooner.

1. The true use and end of Natural Philosophy is to explain the phenomena of nature; which is done by discovering the laws of nature, and reducing particular appearances to them. This is Sir Isaac Newton's method; and such method or design is not in the least inconsistent with the principles I lay down. This mechanical philosophy doth not assign or suppose any one natural *efficient cause* in the strict and proper sense; nor is it, as to its use, concerned about *matter*; nor is matter connected therewith; nor doth it infer the being of matter[3]. It must be owned, indeed, that the mechanical philosophers do suppose (though unnecessarily) the being of matter[3]. They do even pretend to demonstrate that matter is proportional to gravity, which, if they could, this indeed would furnish an unanswerable objection. But let us examine their demonstration. It is laid down in the first place, that the momentum of any body is the product of its quantity by its velocity, *moles in celeritatem ducta*. If, therefore, the velocity is given, the momentum will be as its quantity. But it is observed that bodies of all kinds descend in vacuo with the same velocity; therefore the momentum of descending bodies is as the quantity or moles, *i.e.* gravity is as

[1] See my *Life and Letters of Berkeley* (1871), pp. 178–82, where they appear in part.

[2] This is one of the not infrequent references to ill-health in his letters from this date onwards to the end of his life.

[3] i.e. independent matter, unrealised in percipient life.

matter. But this argument concludes nothing, and is a mere circle. For, I ask, when it is premised that the momentum is equal to the *moles in celeritatem ducta*, how the moles or quantity of matter is estimated? If you say, by extent, the proposition is not true; if by weight, then you suppose that the quantity of matter is proportional to matter; *i. e.* the conclusion is taken for granted in one of the premises. As for absolute space and motion, which are also supposed without any necessity or use, I refer you to what I have already published; particularly in a Latin treatise, *De Motu*, which I shall take care to send to you.

2. Cause is taken in different senses. A proper active efficient cause I can conceive none but Spirit; nor any action, strictly speaking, but where there is Will. But this doth not hinder the allowing occasional causes (which are in truth but signs); and more is not requisite in the best physics, *i. e.* the mechanical philosophy. Neither doth it hinder the admitting other causes besides God; such as spirits of different orders, which may be termed active causes, as acting indeed, though by limited and derivative powers. But as for an unthinking agent, no point of physics is explained by it, nor is it conceivable.

3. Those who have all along contended for a material world have yet acknowledged that *natura naturans* (to use the language of the Schoolmen) is God; and that the divine conservation of things is equipollent to, and in fact the same thing with, a continued repeated creation: in a word, that conservation and creation differ only in the *terminus a quo*. These are the common opinions of the Schoolmen; and Durandus, who held the world to be a machine like a clock, made and put in motion by God, but afterwards continuing to go of itself, was therein particular, and had few followers. The very poets teach a doctrine not unlike the schools,—*Mens agitat molem*. (Virg. Æneid VI.) The Stoics and Platonists are everywhere full of the same notion. I am not therefore singular in this point itself, so much as in my way of proving it. Further, it seems to me that the power and wisdom of God are as worthily set forth by supposing Him to act immediately as an omnipresent infinitely active Spirit, as by supposing Him to act by the mediation of subordinate causes, in preserving and governing the natural world. A clock may indeed go independent of its maker or artificer, inasmuch as the gravitation of its pendulum proceeds from another cause, and that the artificer is not the adequate cause of the clock; so that the analogy would not be just to suppose a clock is in respect of its artist what the world is in respect of its Creator. For aught I can see, it is no disparagement to the perfections of God to say that all things necessarily depend on Him as their Conservator as well as Creator, and that all nature would shrink to nothing, if not upheld and preserved in being by the same

force that first created it. This I am sure is agreeable to Holy Scripture, as well as to the writings of the most esteemed philosophers; and if it is to be considered that men make use of tools and machines to supply defect of power in themselves, we shall think it no honour to the Divinity to attribute such things to him.

4. As to guilt, it is the same thing whether I kill a man with my hands or an instrument; whether I do it myself or make use of a ruffian. The imputation therefore upon the sanctity of God is equal, whether we suppose our sensations to be produced immediately by God, or by the mediation of instruments and subordinate causes, all which are His creatures, and moved by His laws. This theological consideration, therefore, may be waved, as leading beside the question; for such I hold all points to be which bear equally hard on both sides of it. Difficulties about the principle of moral actions will cease, if we consider that all guilt is in the will, and that our ideas[1], from whatever cause they are produced, are alike inert.

5. As to the art and contrivance in the parts of animals, &c., I have considered that matter in the *Principles of Human Knowledge*, and, if I mistake not, sufficiently shewn the wisdom and use thereof, considered as signs and means of information. I do not indeed wonder that on first reading what I have written, men are not thoroughly convinced. On the contrary, I should very much wonder if prejudices, which have been many years taking root, should be extirpated in a few hours' reading. I had no inclination to trouble the world with large volumes. What I have done was rather with a view of giving hints to thinking men, who have leisure and curiosity to go to the bottom of things, and pursue them in their own minds. Two or three times reading these small tracts, and making what is read the occasion of thinking, would, I believe, render the whole familiar and easy to the mind, and take off that shocking appearance which hath often been observed to attend speculative truths.

6. I see no difficulty in conceiving a change of state, such as is vulgarly called Death, as well without as with material substance. It is sufficient for that purpose that we allow *sensible* bodies, *i.e.* such as are immediately perceived by sight and touch; the existence of which I am so far from questioning (as philosophers are used to do), that I establish it, I think, upon evident principles. Now, it seems very easy to conceive the soul to exist in a separate state (*i.e.* divested from those limits and laws of motion and perception with which she is embarrassed here), and to exercise herself on new ideas, without the intervention of these tangible things we call bodies. It is even very possible to apprehend

[1] 'our ideas,' i. e. the phenomena that are presented to our senses.

how the soul may have ideas of colour without an eye, or of sounds without an ear.

And now, Sir, I submit these hints (which I have hastily thrown together as soon as my illness gave me leave) to your own maturer thoughts, which after all you will find the best instructors. What you have seen of mine was published when I was very young, and without doubt hath many defects. For though the notions should be true (as I verily think they are), yet it is difficult to express them clearly and consistently, language being framed to common use and received prejudices. I do not therefore pretend that my books can teach truth. All I hope for is, that they may be an occasion to inquisitive men of discovering truth, by consulting their own minds, and looking into their own thoughts. As to the Second Part of my treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, the fact is that I had made a considerable progress in it; but the manuscript was lost about fourteen years ago, during my travels in Italy, and I never had leisure since to do so disagreeable a thing as writing twice on the same subject.

Objections passing through your hands have their full force and clearness. I like them the better. This intercourse with a man of parts and philosophic genius is very agreeable. I sincerely wish we were nearer neighbours[1]. In the meantime, whenever either you or your friends favour me with their thoughts, you may be sure of a punctual correspondence on my part. Before I have done I will venture to recommend these points: 1. To consider well the answers I have already given in my books to several objections. 2. To consider whether any new objection that shall occur doth not suppose the doctrine of *abstract* general ideas. 3. Whether the difficulties proposed in objection to my scheme can be solved by the contrary; for if they cannot, it is plain they can be no objections to mine.

I know not whether you have got my treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge. I intend to send it to you with my tract *De Motu*. My humble service to your friends, to whom I understand I am indebted for some part of your letter.

I am your faithful humble servant,

GEORGE BERKELEY.

Another letter, written after Berkeley was well settled in his new home, shews that further explanation was needed to set several things in a fuller and clearer light.

[1] Stratford is about 120 miles from Rhode Island.

Reverend Sir,

Yours of Feb. 5th came not to my hands before yesterday; and this afternoon, being informed that a sloop is ready to sail towards your town, I would not let slip the opportunity of returning you an answer, though wrote in a hurry.

1. I have no objection against calling the Ideas in the mind of God archetypes of ours. But I object against those archetypes by philosophers supposed to be real things, and to have an absolute rational existence, distinct from their being perceived by any mind whatsoever; it being the opinion of all materialists[1] that an ideal existence in the Divine Mind is one thing, and the real existence of material things another.

2. As to Space. I have no notion of any but that which is relative. I know some late philosophers have attributed extension to God, particularly mathematicians, one of whom, in a treatise *De Spatio Reali*[2], pretends to find out fifteen of the incommunicable attributes of God in Space. But it seems to me that, they being all negative, he might as well have found them in Nothing; and that it would have been as justly inferred from Space being impassive, increated, indivisible, &c., that it was Nothing as that it was God.

Sir Isaac Newton supposeth an absolute Space, different from relative, and consequent thereto; absolute Motion different from relative motion; and with all other mathematicians he supposeth the infinite divisibility of the finite parts of this absolute Space; he also supposeth material bodies to drift therein. Now, though I do acknowledge Sir Isaac to have been an extraordinary man, and most profound mathematician, yet I cannot agree with him in these particulars. I make no scruple to use the word Space, as well as all other words in common use; but I do not thereby mean a distinct absolute being. For my meaning I refer you to what I have published.

By the τὸ νῦν I suppose to be implied that all things, past and to come, are actually present to the mind of God, and that there is in Him no change, variation, or succession. A succession of ideas I take to *constitute* Time, and not to be only the sensible measure thereof, as Mr. Locke and others think. But in these matters every man is to think for himself, and speak as he finds. One of my earliest inquiries was about Time, which led me into several paradoxes that I did not think fit or necessary to publish; particularly the notion that the Resurrection follows the next moment to death. We are confounded and perplexed

[1] He calls all who believe in the independent reality of matter 'materialists.'

[2] *De Spacio Reali, seu ente Infinito: Conamen Math. Metaph.* (1706).

about Time. (1) Supposing a succession in God. (2) Conceiving that we have an *abstract idea* of Time. (3) Supposing that the Time in one mind is to be measured by the succession of ideas in another. (4) Not considering the true use and end of words, which as often terminate in the will as in the understanding, being employed rather to excite, influence, and direct action, than to produce clear and distinct ideas.

3. That the soul of man is passive as well as active, I make no doubt. Abstract general ideas was a notion that Mr. Locke held in common with the Schoolmen, and I think all other philosophers; it runs through his whole book of Human Understanding. He holds an abstract idea of Existence; exclusive of perceiving and being perceived. I cannot find I have any such idea, and this is my reason against it. Des Cartes proceeds upon other principles. One square foot of snow is as white as a thousand yards; one single perception is as truly a perception as one hundred. Now, any degree of perception being sufficient to Existence, it will not follow that we should say one *existed more* at one time than another, any more than we should say a thousand yards of snow are whiter than one yard. But, after all, this comes to a verbal dispute. I think it might prevent a good deal of obscurity and dispute to examine well what I have said about abstraction, and about the true sense and significance of words, in several parts of these things that I have published[1], though much remains to be said on that subject.

You say you agree with me that there is nothing within your mind but God and other spirits, with the attributes or properties belonging to them, and the ideas contained in them.

This is a principle or main point, from which, and from what I had laid down about abstract ideas, much may be deduced. But if in every inference we should not agree, so long as the main points are settled and well understood, I should be less solicitous about particular conjectures. I could wish that all the things I have published on these philosophical subjects were read in the order wherein I published them; once, to take in the design and connexion of them, and a second time with a critical eye, adding your own thought and observation upon every part as you went along.

I send you herewith the bound books and one unbound. You will take yourself what you have not already. You will give the *Principles*, the *Theory*, and the *Dialogues*, one of each, with my service, to the gentleman who is Fellow of Newhaven College, whose compliments you brought to me. What remains you will give as you please.

If at any time your affairs should draw you into these parts, you shall be very welcome to pass as many days as you can

[1] See especially the Introduction to the *Principles of Human Knowledge*.

spend at my house. Four or five days' conversation would set several things in a fuller and clearer light than writing could do in as many months. In the meantime, I shall be glad to hear from you or your friends, whenever you please to favour,

Reverend Sir,

Your very humble servant,

GEORGE BERKELEY.

Pray let me know whether they would admit the writings of Hooker and Chillingworth into the Library of the College in Newhaven[1].

Rhode Island, March 24, 1730.

When Berkeley was in Rhode Island, America possessed in Jonathan Edwards, at Northampton, its most illustrious metaphysician, of whom it has been truly said that he laid the foundation of its independent literature, unsurpassed among his contemporaries in power of subtle argument. It is less known that in early life he adopted Berkeley's conceptions of the ideal reality of the material world and sense-symbolism; although in interpretating and applying the Principles of Causality and Substance he is more akin to Collins or Spinoza than to Berkeley, in his celebrated *Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will,* which appeared in 1754. Long before he had argued for the dependence of the data of sense for their reality upon percipient mind, recognising too that they are not originated or ultimately regulated by the human percipient, but by God acting uniformly in Nature and in Man. 'The world,' he finds to be 'an ideal one; the law of creating, and the succession of ideas in sense, is constant and regular. If we suppose that the world is mental, in the sense supposed, natural philosophy is not in the least affected. . . . Place is only mental: *within* and *without* are mental concep-

[1] Yale College. He suggests a possible Puritan prejudice against Anglican theologians, which might have been strengthened by the recent withdrawal of Johnson from the College and the Congregationalist communion, and his admission to the Church of England.

tions. When I say the material universe exists only in mind, I mean that it is absolutely dependent on the conceptions of mind for its existence; and does not exist as spirits do, whose existence does not consist in, nor in dependence on, the conceptions of other minds.... The infinitely exact and precise Divine Idea, together with an answerable, perfectly exact, precise and stable Will, with respect to corresponding communications to created minds, is the *substance* of all bodies.' The conception of the visible world, on which the argument in *Alciphron* turns, based upon Berkeley's discovery that the original data of sight are wholly different from those of touch, is also adopted by Edwards, who argues that error is involved in *all* unenlightened common assumptions regarding the material world.

Edwards does not name Berkeley. It does not appear that they ever met or that they were in any way known to one another; but the coincidence in their philosophical conceptions is interesting, like that between Berkeley and Collier[1]. At any rate, it is worthy of record that Berkeley was preparing *Alciphron* in Rhode Island in the neighbourhood of a disciple so sympathetic as Johnson, and an ally so powerful as Jonathan Edwards.

[1] See Appendix on Arthur Collier and Jonathan Edwards, in vol. III.

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THE Author's design being to consider the Free-thinker in the various lights of atheist, libertine, enthusiast, scorner, critic, metaphysician, fatalist, and sceptic, it must not therefore be imagined that every one of these characters agrees with every individual Free-thinker; no more being implied than that each part agrees with some or other of the sect. There may, possibly, be a reader who shall think the character of atheist agrees with none; but though it hath been often said there is no such thing as a speculative atheist, yet we must allow there are several atheists who pretend to speculation. This the Author knows to be true; and is well assured that one of the most noted writers against Christianity in our times declared he had found out a demonstration against the being of a God[1]. And he doubts

[1] Anthony Collins is apparently the writer referred to. The following passage in Chandler's 'Life' (p. 57) of Johnson is interesting:—'While the Dean [Berkeley] resided at Rhode Island, he composed his *Alciphron, or, Minute Philosopher*, written by way of dialogue, in the manner of Plato. The design of it was to vindicate the Christian religion, in answer to the various objections and cavils of atheists, libertines, enthusiasts, scorners, critics, metaphysicians, fatalists, and sceptics. In the "Advertisement" prefixed to these Dialogues, the author affirms that he was well assured one of the most noted writers against Christianity had declared he had found out a demonstration against the being of a God. Mr. Johnson, in one of his visits to the Dean, conversing with him on the subject of the work then on hand, was more particularly informed by him, that he himself (the Dean) had heard this strange declaration, while he was present in one of the deistical clubs in London, in the pretended character of a learner; that Collins was the man who made it; and that the "demonstration" was what he afterwards published, in an attempt to prove that every action is the effect of fate and necessity, in his book entitled *A Philosophical Inquiry concerning Human Liberty*. And indeed, could the point be once established, that everything is produced by fate and necessity, it would naturally follow that there

not, whoever will be at the pains to inform himself, by a general conversation, as well as books, of the principles and tenets of our modern Free-thinkers, will see too much cause to be persuaded that nothing in the ensuing characters is beyond the life.

[[1] As the author hath not confined himself to write against books alone, so he thinks it necessary to make this declaration. It must not, therefore, be thought that authors are misrepresented, if every notion of Alciphron or Lysicles is not found precisely in them. A gentleman in private conference, may be supposed to speak plainer than others write, to improve on their hints, and draw conclusions from their principles.

Whatever they pretend, it is the author's opinion that all those who write, either explicitly or by insinuation, against the dignity, freedom, and immortality of the Human Soul,

is no God; or that He is a very useless and insignificant Being, which amounts to the same thing.'

Collins's *Philosophical Inquiry concerning Human Liberty* was first published in 1715. It is virtually an argument against a finally ethical conception of the universe. The second edition of this book followed in 1717, in which year Dr. Samuel Clarke published *Remarks upon the 'Philosophical Inquiry concerning Human Liberty,'* as a reply to Collins. In 1729, shortly after Clarke's death, a reply to his *Remarks*, attributed to Collins, appeared, in the form of a *Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity: wherein the powers of ideas, from their first entrance into the soul, until their production of action, is delineated; with some Remarks upon the late Reverend Dr. Clarke's reasoning on this point.* By A. C., Esq. The reply was unknown to Dugald Stewart (Dissertation, art. Collins). Collins died in 1729. A third edition of his *Philosophical Inquiry* appeared in 1735.

The way in which Berkeley here and elsewhere refers to Collins is difficult to reconcile with the affectionate regard which Locke in his old age expressed for the youthful Essex squire, who was his devoted friend.

The question raised by Collins was the occasion of various tracts, in defence and attack, about the time of the publication of *Alciphron*. In particular John Jackson, Rector of Rossington, and Dr. Gretton, Rector of Springfield, Essex, replied, in 1730, to the '*Dissertation* of A. C.,' published in the preceding year. The controversy between Clarke and Collins is alluded to in (Corry's ?) *Reflections upon Liberty and Necessity*, London, 1761, where it is said (p. 7) that the threatened interposition of the magistrates hindered Collins from defending his *Philosophical Inquiry*. The English literature of the controversy about moral agency in man and in the universe, in the former part of last century, is copious and curious; as also in the preceding century, when it engaged Hobbes, Bramhall, and Cudworth.

[1] The bracketed paragraphs were introduced in the second edition.

may so far forth be justly said to unhinge the principles of morality, and destroy the means of making men reasonably virtuous. Much is to be apprehended from that quarter against the interests of virtue. Whether the apprehension of a certain admired writer [1], that the cause of virtue is likely to suffer less from its witty antagonists than from its tender nurses, who are apt to overlay it, and kill it with excess of care and cherishing, and make it a mercenary thing, by talking so much of its reward—whether, I say, this apprehension be so well founded, the reader must determine.]

As for the Treatise concerning Vision, why the Author annexed it to the 'Minute Philosopher' will appear upon perusal of the Fourth Dialogue [2].

[1] [Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour, Part II. sect. 3.]—AUTHOR. The allusion is, of course, to Shaftesbury. Cf. *Alciphron*, Dial. III, in which Shaftesbury is the prominent figure.

[2] The *Essay on Vision* is not appended to the author's third edition (1752).

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[1] For explanation of bracketed numbers see p. 323 below.

ALCIPHRON

OR

THE MINUTE PHILOSOPHER

THE FIRST DIALOGUE[1].

1. Introduction. 2. Aim and endeavours of free-thinkers. 3. Opposed by the clergy. 4. Liberty of free-thinking. 5. Farther account of the views of free-thinkers. 6. The progress of a free-thinker towards atheism. 7. Joint imposture of the priest and magistrate. 8. The free-thinker's method in making converts and discoveries. 9. The atheist alone free. His sense of natural good and evil. 10. Modern free-thinkers more properly named *minute philosophers*. 11. Minute philosophers, what sort of men, and how educated. 12. Their numbers, progress, and tenets. 13. Compared with other philosophers. 14. What things and notions to be esteemed natural. 15. Truth the same, notwithstanding diversity of opinion. 16. Rule and measure of moral truths.

1. I FLATTERED myself, Theages, that before this time I might have been able to have sent you an agreeable account of the success of the affair which brought me into this remote corner of the country. But, instead of this, I should now give you the detail of its miscarriage, if I did not rather choose to entertain you with some amusing

[1] In this Dialogue we are introduced to the interlocutors and to the sect of Free-thinkers, or Minute Philosophers, personified, in one aspect, by Alciphron, i.e. Strong-Mind—sarcastically, and by Lysicles, the man of pleasure, in another. The scenes supposed are in Rhode Island, around Whitehall, Berkeley's American home where he wrote *Alciphron*, and where he was informed of the 'miscarriage' of his Bermuda enterprise.

incidents, which have helped to make me easy under a circumstance I could neither obviate nor foresee. Events are not in our power; but it always is, to make a good use even of the very worst. And, I must needs own, the course and event of this affair gave opportunity for reflexions that make me some amends for a great loss of time, pains, and expense. A life of action, which takes its issues from the counsels, passions, and views of other men, if it doth not draw a man to imitate, will at least teach him to observe. And a mind at liberty to reflect on its own observations, if it produce nothing useful to the world, seldom fails of entertainment to itself. For several months past, I have enjoyed such liberty and leisure in this distant retreat, far beyond the verge of that great whirlpool of business, faction, and pleasure, which is called *the world*. And a retreat in itself agreeable, after a long scene of trouble and disquiet, was made much more so by the conversation and good qualities of my host, Euphranor, who unites in his own person the philosopher and the farmer, two characters not so inconsistent in nature as by custom they seem to be.

Euphranor, from the time he left the university, hath lived in this small town, where he is possessed of a convenient house with a hundred acres of land adjoining to it; which, being improved by his own labour, yield him a plentiful subsistence. He hath a good collection, chiefly of old books, left him by a clergyman his uncle, under whose care he was brought up. And the business of his farm doth not hinder him from making good use of it. He hath read much, and thought more; his health and strength of body enabling him the better to bear fatigue of mind. He is of opinion that he could not carry on his studies with more advantage in the closet than the field, where his mind is seldom idle while he prunes the trees, follows the plough, or looks after his flocks.

In the house of this honest friend I became acquainted with Crito, a neighbouring gentleman of distinguished merit and estate, who lives in great friendship with Euphranor.

Last summer, Crito, whose parish-church is in our town, dining on a Sunday at Euphranor's, I happened to inquire after his guests, whom we had seen at church with him the

Sunday before. They are both well, said *Crito*, but, having once occasionally conformed, to see what sort of assembly our parish could afford, they had no further curiosity to gratify at church, and so chose to stay at home. How, said *Euphranor*, are they then dissenters? No, replied *Crito*, they are *free-thinkers*. Euphranor, who had never met with any of this species or sect of men, and but little of their writings, shewed a great desire to know their principles or system. That is more, said *Crito*, than I will undertake to tell you. Their writers are of different opinions. Some go farther, and explain themselves more freely than others. But the current general notions of the sect are best learned from conversation with those who profess themselves of it. Your curiosity may now be satisfied, if you and Dion[1] would spend a week at my house with these gentlemen, who seem very ready to declare and propagate their opinions. Alciphron is above forty, and no stranger either to men or books. I knew him first at the Temple, which, upon an estate's falling to him, he quitted, to travel through the polite parts of Europe. Since his return he hath lived in the amusements of the town, which, being grown stale and tasteless to his palate, have flung him into a sort of splenetic indolence. The young gentleman, Lysicles, is a near kinsman of mine, one of lively parts and a general insight into letters, who, after having passed the forms of education, and seen a little of the world, fell into an intimacy with men of pleasure and free-thinkers, I am afraid much to the damage of his constitution and his fortune. But what I most regret is the corruption of his mind, by a set of pernicious principles, which, having been observed to survive the passions of youth, forestall even the remote hopes of amendment. They are both men of fashion, and would be agreeable enough, if they did not fancy themselves free-thinkers. But this, to speak the truth, has given them a certain air and manner, which a little too visibly declare they think themselves wiser than the rest of the world. I should therefore be not at all displeased if my

[1] Dion personifies Berkeley. See *Letter to Dion, occasioned by his book called 'Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher.'* By the Author of the 'Fable of the Bees.' (London, 1732.)

guests met with their match, where they least expected it—in a country farmer. I shall not, replied *Euphranor*, pretend to any more than barely to inform myself of their principles and opinions. For this end I propose to-morrow to set a week's task to my labourers, and accept your invitation, if Dion thinks good. To which I gave consent. Meanwhile, said *Crito*, I shall prepare my guests, and let them know that an honest neighbour hath a mind to discourse with them on the subject of their free-thinking. And, if I am not much mistaken, they will please themselves with the prospect of leaving a convert behind them, even in a country village.

Next morning Euphranor rose early, and spent the forenoon in ordering his affairs. After dinner we took our walk to Crito's, which lay through half a dozen pleasant fields planted round with plane-trees, that are very common in this part of the country. We walked under the delicious shade of these trees for about an hour before we came to Crito's house, which stands in the middle of a small park, beautified with two fine groves of oak and walnut, and a winding stream of sweet and clear water[1]. We met a servant at the door with a small basket of fruit, which he was carrying into a grove, where he said his master was with the two strangers. We found them all three sitting under a shade. And after the usual forms at first meeting, Euphranor and I sat down by them.

Our conversation began upon the beauty of this rural scene, the fine season of the year, and some late improvements which had been made in the adjacent country by new methods of agriculture. Whence *Alciphron* took occasion to observe, that the most valuable improvements came latest. I should have small temptation, said he, to live where men have neither polished manners, nor improved minds, though the face of the country were ever so well improved. But I have long observed that there is a gradual progress in human affairs. The first care of mankind is to supply the cravings of nature; in the next place they study the conveniences and comforts of life. But the subduing prejudices, and acquiring true knowledge, that Herculean labour, is the last; being what demands

[1] This is a picture of a scene near Whitehall.

the most perfect abilities, and to which all other advantages are preparative. Right, said *Euphranor*, Alciphron hath touched our true defect. It was always my opinion that as soon as we had provided subsistence for the body our next care should be to improve the mind. But the desire of wealth steps between, and engrosseth men's thoughts.

2. *Alciphron.* Thought is that which we are told distinguisheth man from beast; and freedom of thought makes as great a difference between man and man. It is to the noble assertors of this privilege and perfection of human kind, the free-thinkers I mean, who have sprung up and multiplied of late years [1], that we are indebted for all those important discoveries, that ocean of light, which hath broke in and made its way, in spite of slavery and superstition.

Euphranor, who is a sincere enemy to both, testified a great esteem for those worthies who had preserved their country from being ruined by them, having spread so much light and knowledge over the land. He added, that he liked the name and character of a free-thinker: but, in his sense of the word, every honest inquirer after truth in any age or country was entitled to it. He therefore desired to know what this sect was that Alciphron had spoken of as newly sprung up; what were their tenets; what were their discoveries; and wherein they employed themselves for the benefit of mankind. Of all which, he should think himself obliged, if Alciphron would inform him.

That I shall very easily, replied *Alciphron*, for I profess myself one of the number, and my most intimate friends are some of the most considerable among them.

And, perceiving that Euphranor heard him with respect,

[1] See Collins' *Discourse of Free-thinking, occasioned by the rise and growth of a sect called Free-thinkers* (1713). The free-thinkers are called 'minute philosophers' by Berkeley, because they leave out of their philosophy all that transcends the data of the senses, and are therefore faithless to truth, because faithless to the spiritual foundation of the whole. Their philosophy is treated by him as of the narrow sort which, according to Bacon, 'inclineth Man's mind to Atheism, while deeper philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion; for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest within and go no further, but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate, and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity.'

he proceeded very fluently.—You must know, said he, that the mind of man may be fitly compared to a piece of land. What stubbing, ploughing, digging, and harrowing are to the one, that thinking, reflecting, examining are to the other. Each hath its proper culture; and, as land that is suffered to lie waste and wild for a long tract of time will be overspread with brush-wood, brambles, thorns, and such vegetables which have neither use nor beauty; even so there will not fail to sprout up in a neglected uncultivated mind a great number of prejudices and absurd opinions, which owe their origin partly to the soil itself, the passions and imperfections of the mind of man, and partly to those seeds which chance to be scattered in it by every wind of doctrine, which the cunning of statesmen, the singularity of pedants, the superstition of fools, or the imposture of priests shall raise. Represent to yourself the mind of man, or human nature in general, that for so many ages had lain obnoxious to the frauds of designing and the follies of weak men; how it must be overrun with prejudices and errors, what firm and deep roots they must have taken, and consequently how difficult a task it must be to extirpate them! And yet this work, no less difficult than glorious, is the employment of the modern free-thinkers. Alciphron having said this made a pause, and looked round on the company.

Truly, said I, a very laudable undertaking!

We think, said *Euphranor*, that it is praiseworthy to clear and subdue the earth, to tame brute animals, to fashion the outsides of men, provide sustenance for their bodies, and cure their maladies. But what is all this in comparison of that most excellent and useful undertaking—to free mankind from their errors, and to improve and adorn their minds. For things of less merit towards the world altars have been raised, and temples built, in ancient times.

Too many in our days, replied *Alciphron*, are such fools as not to know their best benefactors from their worst enemies. They have a blind respect for those who enslave them, and look upon their deliverers as a dangerous sort of men that would undermine received principles and opinions.

Euphranor. It were a great pity such worthy ingenious men should meet with any discouragement. For my part,

I should think a man who spent his time in such a painful impartial search after truth a better friend to mankind than the greatest statesman or hero; the advantage of whose labours is confined to a little part of the world and a short space of time, whereas a ray of truth may enlighten the whole world and extend to future ages.

Alc. It will be some time I fear before the common herd think as you do. But the better sort, the men of parts and polite education, pay a due regard to the patrons of light and truth.

3. *Euph.* The clergy, no doubt, are on all occasions ready to forward and applaud your worthy endeavours.

Upon hearing this *Lysicles* could hardly refrain from laughing. And *Alciphron* with an air of pity told Euphranor that he perceived he was unacquainted with the real character of those men. For, saith he, you must know that of all men living they are our greatest enemies. If it were possible, they would extinguish the very light of nature, turn the world into a dungeon, and keep mankind for ever in chains and darkness.

Euph. I never imagined anything like this of our Protestant clergy, particularly those of the Established Church, whom, if I may be allowed to judge by what I have seen of them and their writings, I should have thought lovers of learning and useful knowledge.

Alc. Take my word for it, priests of all religions are the same: wherever there are priests there will be priestcraft; and wherever there is priestcraft there will be a persecuting spirit, which they never fail to exert to the utmost of their power against all those who have the courage to think for themselves, and will not submit to be hoodwinked and manacled by their reverend leaders. Those great masters of pedantry and jargon have coined several systems, which are all equally true, and of equal importance to the world. The contending sects are each alike fond of their own, and alike prone to discharge their fury upon all who dissent from them. Cruelty and ambition being the darling vices of priests and churchmen all the world over, they endeavour in all countries to get an ascendant over the rest of mankind; and the magistrate, having a joint interest with the priest in subduing, amusing, and

scaring the people, too often lends a hand to the hierarchy, who never think their authority and possessions secure, so long as those who differ from them in opinion are allowed to partake even in the common rights belonging to their birth or species. To represent the matter in a true light, figure to yourselves a monster or spectre made up of superstition and enthusiasm, the joint issue of statecraft and priestcraft, rattling chains in one hand, and with the other brandishing a flaming sword over the land, and menacing destruction to all who shall dare to follow the dictates of Reason and Common Sense. Do but consider this, and then say if there was not danger as well as difficulty in our undertaking. Yet, such is the generous ardour that truth inspires, our free-thinkers are neither overcome by the one nor daunted by the other. In spite of both we have already made so many proselytes among the better sort, and their numbers increase so fast, that we hope we shall be able to carry all before us, beat down the bulwarks of all tyranny, secular or ecclesiastical, break the fetters and chains of our countrymen, and restore the original inherent rights, liberties, and prerogatives of mankind.

Euphranor heard this discourse with his mouth open, and his eyes fixed upon *Alciphron*, who, having uttered it with no small emotion, stopped to draw breath and recover himself; but, finding that nobody made answer, he resumed the thread of his discourse, and, turning to Euphranor, spoke in a lower note what follows:—The more innocent and honest a man is, the more liable is he to be imposed on by the specious pretences of other men. You have probably met with certain writings of our divines that treat of grace, virtue, goodness, and such matters, fit to amuse and deceive a simple, honest mind. But, believe me when I tell you they are all at bottom (however they may gild their designs) united by one common principle in the same interest. I will not deny there may be here and there a poor half-witted man that means no mischief; but this I will be bold to say, that all the men of sense among them are true at bottom to these three pursuits of ambition, avarice, and revenge.

4. While Alciphron was speaking, a servant came to tell

him and Lysicles that some men who were going to London waited to receive their orders. Whereupon they both rose up, and went towards the house. They were no sooner gone but *Euphranor*, addressing himself to Crito, said, he believed that poor gentleman had been a great sufferer for his free-thinking; for that he seemed to express himself with the passion and resentment natural to men who have received very bad usage.

I believe no such thing, answered *Crito*, but have often observed those of his sect run into two faults of conversation, declaiming and bantering, just as the tragic or the comic humour prevails. Sometimes they work themselves into high passions, and are frightened at spectres of their own raising. In those fits every country curate passes for an inquisitor. At other times they affect a sly facetious manner, making use of hints and allusions, expressing little, insinuating much, and upon the whole seeming to divert themselves with the subject and their adversaries. But, if you would know their opinions, you must make them speak out and keep close to the point. Persecution for free-thinking is a topic they are apt to enlarge on, though without any just cause, every one being at full liberty to think what he pleases, there being no such thing in England that I know as persecution for opinion, sentiment, or thought. But in every country, I suppose, some care is taken to restrain petulant speech, and, whatever men's inward thoughts may be, to discourage an outward contempt of what the public esteemeth sacred. Whether this care in England hath of late been so excessive as to distress the subject of this once free and easy government, whether the free-thinkers can truly complain of any hardship upon the score of conscience or opinion, you will better be able to judge, when you hear from themselves an account of the numbers, progress, and notions of their sect; which I doubt not they will communicate fully and freely, provided nobody present seem shocked or offended: for in that case it is possible good manners may put them upon some reserve.

Oh! said *Euphranor*, I am never angry with any man for his opinion: whether he be Jew, Turk, or Idolator, he may speak his mind freely to me without fear of offending.

I should even be glad to hear what he hath to say, provided he saith it in an ingenuous candid manner. Whoever digs in the mine of truth I look on as my fellow-labourer; but if, while I am taking true pains, he diverts himself with teasing me, and flinging dust in mine eyes, I shall soon be tired of him.

5. In the meantime, Alciphron and Lysicles, having despatched what they went about, returned to us. Lysicles sat down where he had been before. But *Alciphron* stood over against us, with his arms folded across, and his head reclined on the left shoulder, in the posture of a man meditating. We sat silent, not to disturb his thoughts; and after two or three minutes he uttered these words—Oh truth! oh liberty! After which he remained musing as before.

Upon this *Euphranor* took the freedom to interrupt him. Alciphron, said he, it is not fair to spend your time in soliloquies. The conversation of learned and knowing men is rarely to be met with in this corner, and the opportunity you have put into my hands I value too much not to make the best use of it.

Alc. Are you then in earnest a votary of truth, and is it possible you should bear the liberty of a fair inquiry?

Euph. It is what I desire of all things.

Alc. What! upon every subject? upon the notions you first sucked in with your milk, and which have been ever since nursed by parents, pastors, tutors, religious assemblies, books of devotion, and such methods of prepossessing men's minds?

Euph. I love information upon all subjects that come in my way, and especially upon those that are most important.

Alc. If then you are in earnest, hold fair and stand firm, while I probe your prejudices and extirpate your principles.

Dum veteres avias tibi de pulmone revello.

Having said thus, *Alciphron* knit his brows and made a short pause, after which he proceeded in the following manner:—

If we are at the pains to dive and penetrate into the bottom of things, and analyse opinions into their first

principles, we shall find that those opinions which are thought of greatest consequence have the slightest original, being derived either from the casual customs of the country where we live, or from early instruction instilled into our tender minds, before we are able to discern between right and wrong, true and false. The vulgar (by whom I understand all those who do not make a free use of their reason) are apt to take these prejudices for things sacred and unquestionable; believing them to be imprinted on the hearts of men by God Himself, or conveyed by revelation from heaven, or to carry with them so great light and evidence as must force an assent without any inquiry or examination. Thus the shallow vulgar have their heads furnished with sundry conceits, principles, and doctrines—religious, moral, and political—all which they maintain with a zeal proportionable to their want of reason. On the other hand, those who duly employ their faculties in the search of truth, take especial care to weed out of their minds, and extirpate all such notions or prejudices as were planted in them before they arrived at the free and entire use of reason. This difficult task hath been successfully performed by our modern free-thinkers, who have not only dissected with great sagacity the received systems, and traced every established prejudice to the fountain-head, the true and genuine motives of assent: but also, having been able to embrace in one comprehensive view the several parts and ages of the world, they observed a wonderful variety of customs and rites, of institutions religious and civil, of notions and opinions very unlike, and even contrary one to another—a certain sign they cannot all be true. And yet they are all maintained by their several partisans with the same positive air and warm zeal; and, if examined, will be found to bottom on one and the same foundation, the strength of prejudice. By the help of these remarks and discoveries, they have broke through the bands of popular custom, and, having freed themselves from imposture, do now generously lend a hand to their fellow-subjects, to lead them into the same paths of light and liberty. Thus, gentlemen, I have given you a summary account of the views and endeavours of those men who are called free-thinkers. If, in the course of what I have said, or shall say hereafter, there be some things contrary to

your preconceived opinions, and therefore shocking and disagreeable, you will pardon the freedom and plainness of a philosopher, and consider that, whatever displeasure I give you of that kind, I do it in strict regard to truth, and obedience to your own commands. I am very sensible that eyes long kept in the dark cannot bear a sudden view of noonday light, but must be brought to it by degrees. It is for this reason the ingenious gentlemen of our profession are accustomed to proceed gradually, beginning with those prejudices to which men have the least attachment, and thence proceeding to undermine the rest by slow and insensible degrees, till they have demolished the whole fabric of human folly and superstition. But the little time I can propose to spend here obligeth me to take a shorter course, and be more direct and plain than possibly may be thought to suit with prudence and good manners.

Upon this, we assured him, he was at full liberty to speak his mind of things, persons, and opinions, without the least reserve.

It is a liberty, replied *Alciphron*, that we free-thinkers are equally willing to give and take. We love to call things by their right names, and cannot endure that truth should suffer through complaisance. Let us, therefore, lay it down for a preliminary, that no offence be taken at anything, whatsoever shall be said on either side. To which we all agreed.

6. In order then, said *Alciphron*, to find out the truth, we will suppose that I am bred up, for instance, in the Church of England. When I come to maturity of judgment, and reflect on the particular worship and opinions of this Church, I do not remember when or by what means they first took possession of my mind, but there I find them from time immemorial. Then, casting an eye on the education of children, from whence I can make a judgment of my own, I observe they are instructed in religious matters before they can reason about them; and, consequently, that all such instruction is nothing else but filling the tender mind of a child with prejudices. I do, therefore, reject all those religious notions, which I consider as the other follies of my childhood. I am confirmed in

this way of thinking when I look abroad into the world, where I observe Papists, and several sects of Dissenters; which do all agree in a general profession of belief in Christ, but differ vastly one from another in the particulars of faith and worship. I then enlarge my views so as to take in Jews and Mahometans; between whom and the Christians I perceive, indeed, some small agreement in the belief of one God; but then they have each their distinct laws and revelations, for which they express the same regard. But, extending my view still further to heathenish and idolatrous nations, I discover an endless variety, not only in particular opinions and modes of worship, but even in the very notion of a Deity, wherein they widely differ one from another, and from all the forementioned sects. Upon the whole, instead of truth simple and uniform, I perceive nothing but discord, opposition, and wild pretensions, all springing from the same source, to wit, the prejudice of education. From such reasonings and reflexions as these, thinking men have concluded that all religions are alike false and fabulous. One is a Christian, another a Jew, a third a Mahometan, a fourth an idolatrous Gentile, but all from one and the same reason—because they happen to be bred up each in his respective sect. In the same manner, therefore, as each of these contending parties condemns the rest, so an unprejudiced stander-by will condemn and reject them altogether, observing, that they all draw their origin from the same fallacious principle, and are carried on by the same artifice, to answer the same ends of the priest and the magistrate.

7. *Euph.* You hold then that the magistrate concurs with the priest in imposing on the people?

Alc. I do; and so must every one who considers things in a true light. For, you must know the magistrate's principal aim is to keep the people under him in awe. Now, the public eye restrains men from open offences against the laws and government. But, to prevent secret transgressions, a magistrate finds it expedient that men should believe there is an eye of Providence watching over their private actions and designs. And, to intimidate those who might otherwise be drawn into crimes by the prospect

of pleasure and profit, he gives them to understand that whoever escapes punishment in this life will be sure to find it in the next; and that so heavy and lasting as infinitely to over-balance the pleasure and profit accruing from his crimes. Hence, the belief of a God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments have been esteemed useful engines of government. And, to the end that these notional airy doctrines might make a sensible impression, and be retained on the minds of men, skilful rulers have, in several of the civilized nations of the earth, devised temples, sacrifices, churches, rites, ceremonies, habits, music, prayer, preaching, and the like spiritual trumpery, whereby the priest maketh temporal gains, and the magistrate findeth his account in frightening and subduing the people. This is the original of the combination between Church and State, of religion by law established, of rights, immunities, and incomes of priests all over the world: there being no government but would have you fear God, that you may honour the king or civil power. And you will ever observe that politic princes keep up a good understanding with their clergy, to the end that they in return, by inculcating religion and loyalty into the minds of the people, may render them tame, timorous, and slavish.

Crito and I heard this discourse of Alciphron with the utmost attention, though without any appearance of surprise, there being, indeed, nothing in it to us new or unexpected. But Euphranor, who had never before been present at such conversation, could not help shewing some astonishment; which *Lysicles* observing, asked him with a lively air, how he liked Alciphron's lecture. It is, said he, the first I believe that you ever heard of the kind, and requireth a strong stomach to digest it.

Euph. I will own to you that my digestion is none of the quickest; but it hath sometimes, by degrees, been able to master things which at first appeared indigestible. At present I admire the free spirit and eloquence of Alciphron; but, to speak the truth, I am rather astonished than convinced of the truth of his opinions. How! (said he, turning to Alciphron) is it then possible you should not believe the being of a God?

Alc. To be plain with you, I do not.

8. But this is what I foresaw—a flood of light let in at once upon the mind being apt to dazzle and disorder, rather than enlighten it. Was I not pinched in time, the regular way would be to have begun with the circumstantials of religion; next to have attacked the mysteries of Christianity; after that proceeded to the practical doctrines; and in the last place to have extirpated that which of all other religious prejudices, being the first taught and basis of the rest, hath taken the deepest root in our minds, I mean, the belief of a God. I do not wonder it sticks with you, having known several very ingenious men who found it difficult to free themselves from this prejudice.

Euph. All men have not the same alacrity and vigour in thinking; for my own part, I find it a hard matter to keep pace with you.

Alc. To help you, I will go a little way back, and resume the thread of my reasoning. First, I must acquaint you that, having applied my mind to contemplate the idea of Truth, I discovered it to be of a stable, permanent, and uniform nature; not various and changeable, like modes or fashions, and things depending on fancy. In the next place, having observed several sects and subdivisions of sects espousing very different and contrary opinions, and yet all professing Christianity, I rejected those points wherein they differed, retaining only that which was agreed to by all, and so became a *Latitudinarian.* Having afterwards, upon a more enlarged view of things, perceived that Christians, Jews, and Mahometans had each their different systems of faith, agreeing only in the belief of one God, I became a *Deist.* Lastly, extending my view to all the other various nations which inhabit this globe, and finding they agreed in no one point of faith, but differed one from another, as well as from the forementioned sects, even in the notion of a God, in which there is as great diversity as in the methods of worship, I thereupon became an *Atheist*: it being my opinion that a man of courage and sense should follow his argument wherever it leads him, and that nothing is more ridiculous than to be a free-thinker by halves. I approve the man who makes thorough work, and, not content with lopping off the branches, extirpates the very root from which they sprung.

9. Atheism therefore, that bugbear of women and fools, is the very top and perfection of free-thinking[1]. It is the grand *arcanum* to which a true genius naturally riseth, by a certain climax or gradation of thought, and without which he can never possess his soul in absolute liberty and repose. For your thorough conviction in this main article, do but examine the notion of a God with the same freedom that you would other prejudices. Trace it to the fountain-head, and you shall not find that you had it by any of your senses, the only true means of discovering what is real and substantial in nature: you will find it lying amongst other old lumber in some obscure corner of the imagination, the proper receptacle of visions, fancies, and prejudices of all kinds; and if you are more attached to this than the rest, it is only because it is the oldest. This is all, take my word for it, and not mine only but that of many more the most ingenious men of the age, who, I can assure you, think as I do on the subject of a Deity. Though some of them hold it proper to proceed with more reserve in declaring to the world their opinion in this particular than in most others. And, it must be owned, there are still too many in England who retain a foolish prejudice against the name of atheist. But it lessens every day among the better sort; and when it is quite worn out, our free-thinkers may then (and not till then) be said to have given the finishing stroke to religion; it being evident that, so long as the existence of God is believed, religion must subsist in some shape or other. But the root being once plucked up, the scions which shoot from it will of course wither and decay. Such are all those whimsical notions of conscience, duty, principle, and the like, which fill a man's head with scruples, awe him with fears, and make him a more thorough slave than the horse he rides. A man had better a thousand times be hunted by bailiffs or messengers than haunted by these spectres, which embarrass and embitter all his pleasures, creating the most real and sore servitude upon earth. But the free-thinker, with a vigorous flight of thought, breaks through those airy springes, and asserts his original independency. Others indeed may talk,

[1] Throughout it is assumed by Berkeley that Atheism is, consciously or unconsciously, the goal of the free-thinking sect.

and write, and fight about liberty, and make an outward pretence to it; but the free-thinker alone is truly free.

Alciphron having ended this discourse with an air of triumph, *Euphranor* spoke to him in the following manner:—

You make clear work. The gentlemen of your profession are, it seems, admirable weeders. You have rooted up a world of notions: I should be glad to see what fine things you have planted in their stead.

Alc. Have patience, good Euphranor. I will shew you, in the first place, that whatever was sound and good we leave untouched, and encourage it to grow in the mind of man. And, secondly, I will shew you what excellent things we have planted in it. You must know then that, pursuing our close and severe scrutiny, we do at last arrive at something solid and real, in which all mankind agree, to wit, the appetites, passions, and senses: these are founded in nature, are real, have real objects, and are attended with real and substantial pleasures; food, drink, sleep, and the like animal enjoyments being what all men like and love. And, if we extend our view to other kinds of animals, we shall find them all agree in this, that they have certain natural appetites and senses, in the gratifying and satisfying of which they are constantly employed. Now, these real natural good things, which include nothing of notion or fancy, we are so far from destroying, that we do all we can to cherish and improve them. According to us, every wise man looks upon himself, or his own bodily existence in this present world, as the centre and ultimate end of all his actions and regards. He considers his appetites as natural guides, directing to his proper good, his passions and senses as the natural true means of enjoying this good. Hence, he endeavours to keep his appetites in high relish, his passions and senses strong and lively, and to provide the greatest quantity and variety of real objects suited to them, which he studieth to enjoy by all possible means, and in the highest perfection imaginable. And the man who can do this without restraint, remorse, or fear is as happy as any other animal whatsoever, or as his nature is capable of being. Thus I have given you a succinct view of the principles, discoveries, and tenets of the select spirits of this enlightened age.

10. *Crito* remarked, that Alciphron had spoken his mind with great clearness.

Yes, replied *Euphranor*, we are obliged to the gentleman for letting us at once into the tenets of his sect. But, if I may be allowed to speak my mind, Alciphron, though in compliance with my own request, hath given me no small uneasiness.

You need, said *Alciphron*, make no apology for speaking freely what you think to one who professeth himself a free-thinker. I should be sorry to make one, whom I meant to oblige, uneasy. Pray let me know wherein I have offended.

I am half ashamed, replied *Euphranor*, to own that I, who am no great genius, have a weakness incidental to little ones. I would say that I have favourite opinions, which you represent to be errors and prejudices. For instance, the Immortality of the Soul is a notion I am fond of, as what supports the mind with a very pleasing prospect. And, if it be an error, I should perhaps be of Tully's mind, who in that case professed he should be sorry to know the truth, acknowledging no sort of obligation to certain philosophers in his days, who taught the soul of man was mortal[1]. They were, it seems, predecessors to those who are now called free-thinkers; which name being too general and indefinite, inasmuch as it comprehends all those who think for themselves, whether they agree in opinion with these gentlemen or no—it should not seem amiss to assign them a specific appellation or peculiar name, whereby to distinguish them from other philosophers, at least in our present conference. For I cannot bear to argue against free-thinking and free-thinkers[2].

Alc. In the eyes of a wise man words are of small moment. We do not think truth attached to a name.

Euph. If you please then, to avoid confusion, let us call your sect by the same name that Tully (who understood the force of language) bestowed upon them.

Alc. With all my heart. Pray what may that name be?

Euph. Why, he calls them *minute philosophers*[3].

Right, said *Crito*, the modern free-thinkers are the very

[1] Cicero, *Tuscul. Quæst.* I. § 24.

[2] Religious thinking, according to Euphranor, is free-thinking; free-thinkers are really the narrow thinkers, and their opponents are the rationalists.

[3] Cicero, *De Finibus*, I. § 18; *De Senectute*, § 86; *De Divinatione*, I. § 62.

same with those Cicero called minute philosophers; which name admirably suits them, they being a sort of sect which diminish all the most valuable things, the thoughts, views, and hopes of men; all the knowledge, notions, and theories of the mind they reduce to sense; human nature they contract and degrade to the narrow low standard of animal life, and assign us only a small pittance of time instead of immortality.

Alciphron very gravely remarked that the gentlemen of his sect had done no injury to man, and that, if he be a little, short-lived, contemptible animal, it was not their saying it made him so: and they were no more to blame for whatever defects they discover than a faithful glass for making the wrinkles which it only shows. As to what you observe, said he, of those we now call *free-thinkers* having been anciently termed *minute philosophers*, it is my opinion this appellation might be derived from their considering things minutely, and not swallowing them in the gross, as other men are used to do. Besides, we all know the best eyes are necessary to discern the minutest objects: it seems, therefore, that minute philosophers might have been so called from their distinguished perspicacity.

Euph. O Alciphron! these minute philosophers (since that is their true name) are a sort of pirates who plunder all that come in their way. I consider myself as a man left stripped and desolate on a bleak beach.

11. But who are these profound and learned men that of late years have demolished the whole fabric which lawgivers, philosophers, and divines had been erecting for so many ages?

Lysicles, hearing these words, smiled, and said he believed Euphranor had figured to himself philosophers in square caps and long gowns: but, thanks to these happy times, the reign of pedantry was over. Our philosophers, said he, are of a different kind from those awkward students who think to come at knowledge by poring on dead languages and old authors, or by sequestering themselves from the cares of the world to meditate in solitude and retirement. They are the best bred men of the age, men who know the world, men of pleasure, men of fashion, and fine gentlemen.

Euph. I have some small notion of the people you mention, but should never have taken them for philosophers.

Cri. Nor would any one else till of late. The world it seems was long under a mistake about the way to knowledge, thinking it lay through a tedious course of academical education and study. But, among the discoveries of the present age, one of the principal is the finding out that such a method doth rather retard and obstruct than promote knowledge.

Alc. Academical study may be comprised in two points, reading and meditation. Their reading is chiefly employed on ancient authors in dead languages: so that a great part of their time is spent in learning words; which, when they have mastered with infinite pains, what do they get by it but old and obsolete notions, that are now quite exploded and out of use? Then, as to their meditations, what can they possibly be good for? He that wants the proper materials of thought may think and meditate for ever to no purpose: those cobwebs spun by scholars out of their own brains being alike unserviceable, either for use or ornament. Proper ideas or materials are only to be got by frequenting good company. I know several gentlemen who, since their appearance in the world, have spent as much time in rubbing off the rust and pedantry of a college education as they had done before in acquiring it.

Lysicles. I will undertake, a lad of fourteen, bred in the modern way, shall make a better figure, and be more considered in any drawing-room or assembly of polite people, than one at four-and-twenty, who hath lain by a long time at school and college. He shall say better things in a better manner, and be more liked by good judges.

Euph. Where doth he pick up all this improvement?

Cri. Where our grave ancestors would never have looked for it—in a drawing-room, a coffee-house, a chocolate-house, at the tavern, or groom-porter's. In these and the like fashionable places of resort, it is the custom for polite persons to speak freely on all subjects, religious, moral, or political. So that a young gentleman who frequents them is in the way of hearing many instructive lectures, seasoned with wit and raillery, and uttered with spirit. Three or four sentences from a man of quality,

spoken with a good air, make more impression and convey more knowledge than a dozen dissertations in a dry academical way.

Euph. There is then no method, or course of studies, in those places?

Lys. None but an easy free conversation, which takes in everything that offers, without any rule or design.

Euph. I always thought that some order was necessary to attain any useful degree of knowledge; that haste and confusion begat a conceited ignorance; that to make our advances sure, they should be gradual, and those points first learned which might cast a light on what was to follow.

Alc. So long as learning was to be obtained only by that slow formal course of study, few of the better sort knew much of it: but, now it has grown an amusement, our young gentry and nobility imbibe it insensibly amidst their diversions, and make a considerable progress.

Euph. Hence probably the great number of minute philosophers.

Cri. It is to this that sect is owing for so many ingenious proficients of both sexes. You may now commonly see (what no former age ever saw) a young lady, or a *petit maître*, nonplus a divine, or an old-fashioned gentleman, who hath read many a Greek and Latin author, and spent much time in hard methodical study.

Euph. It should seem then that method, exactness, and industry are a disadvantage.

Here *Alciphron*, turning to Lysicles, said he could make the point very clear, if Euphranor had any notion of painting.

Euph. I never saw a first-rate picture in my life, but have a tolerable collection of prints, and have seen some good drawings.

Alc. You know then the difference between the Dutch and Italian manner?

Euph. I have some notion of it.

Alc. Suppose now a drawing finished by the nice and laborious touches of a Dutch pencil, and another off-hand scratched out in the free manner of a great Italian master. The Dutch piece, which hath cost so much pains and time, will be exact indeed, but without that force, spirit, and

grace which appear in the other, and are the effects of an easy, free pencil. Do but apply this, and the point will be clear.

Euph. Pray inform me, did those great Italian masters begin and proceed in their art without any choice of method or subject, and always draw with the same ease and freedom? Or did they observe some method, beginning with simple and elementary parts, an eye, a nose, a finger, which they drew with great pains and care, often drawing the same thing, in order to draw it correctly, and so proceeding with patience and industry, till, after a considerable length of time, they arrive at the free masterly manner you speak of. If this were the case, I leave you to make the application.

Alc. You may dispute the matter if you please. But a man of parts is one thing, and a pedant another. Pains and method may do for some sort of people. A man must be a long time kindling wet straw into a vile smothering flame, but spirits blaze out at once.

Euph. The minute philosophers have, it seems, better parts than other men, which qualifies them for a different education.

Alc. Tell me, Euphranor, what is it that gives one man a better mien than another; more politeness in dress, speech, and motion? Nothing but frequenting good company. By the same means men get insensibly a delicate taste, a refined judgment, a certain politeness in thinking and expressing one's self. No wonder if you countrymen are strangers to the advantage of polite conversation, which constantly keeps the mind awake and active, exercising its faculties, and calling forth all its strength and spirit, on a thousand different occasions and subjects that never came in the way of a book-worm in a college, any more than of a ploughman.

Cri. Hence those lively faculties, that quickness of apprehension, that slyness of ridicule, that egregious talent of wit and humour which distinguish the gentlemen of your profession.

Euph. It should seem then that your sect is made up of what you call fine gentlemen.

Lys. Not altogether, for we have among us some contemplative spirits of a coarser education, who, from observ-

ing the behaviour and proceedings of apprentices, watermen, porters, and the assemblies of rabble in the streets, have arrived at a profound knowledge of human nature, and made great discoveries about the principles, springs, and motives of moral actions. These have demolished the received systems, and done a world of good in the city.

Alc. I tell you we have men of all sorts and professions, plodding citizens, thriving stock-jobbers, skilful men in business, polite courtiers, gallant men of the army; but our chief strength, and flower of the flock, are those promising young men who have the advantage of a modern education. These are the growing hopes of our sect, by whose credit and influence in a few years we expect to see those great things accomplished that we have in view.

Euph. I could never have imagined your sect so considerable.

Alc. There are in England many honest folk as much in the dark about these matters as yourselves.

12. To judge of the prevailing opinion among people of fashion, by what a senator saith in the house, a judge upon the bench, or a priest in the pulpit, who all speak according to law, that is to the reverend prejudices of our forefathers, would be wrong. You should go into good company, and mind what men of parts and breeding say, those who are best heard and most admired, as well in public places of resort as in private visits. He only who hath these opportunities can know our real strength, our numbers, and the figure that we make.

Euph. By your account there must be many minute philosophers among the men of rank and fortune.

Alc. Take my word for it, not a few; and they do much contribute to the spreading our notions. For, he who knows the world must observe that fashions constantly descend. It is therefore the right way to propagate an opinion from the upper end. Not to say that the patronage of such men is an encouragement to our authors.

Euph. It seems, then, you have authors among you.

Lys. That we have, several, and those very great men, who have obliged the world with many useful and profound discoveries.

Cri. Moschon, for instance, hath proved that man and

beast are really of the same nature: that consequently a man need only indulge his senses and appetites to be as happy as a brute. Gorgias hath gone further, demonstrating man to be a piece of clock-work or machine; and that thought or reason is the same thing as the impulse of one ball against another. Cimon hath made noble use of these discoveries, proving, as clearly as any proposition in mathematics, that conscience is a whim, and morality a prejudice; and that a man is no more accountable for his actions than a clock is for striking. Tryphon hath written irrefragably on the usefulness of vice. Thrasenor hath confuted the foolish prejudice men had against atheism, shewing that a republic of atheists might live very happily together. Demylas hath made a jest of loyalty, and convinced the world there is nothing in it: to him and another philosopher of the same stamp this age is indebted for discovering that public spirit is an idle enthusiasm, which seizeth only on weak minds. It would be endless to recount the discoveries made by writers of this sect.

Lys. But the masterpiece and finishing stroke is a learned anecdote of our great Diagoras, containing a demonstration against the being of God: which it is conceived the public is not yet ripe for[1]. But I am assured by some judicious friends who have seen it, that it is as clear as daylight, and will do a world of good, at one blow demolishing the whole system of religion. These discoveries are published by our philosophers, sometimes in just volumes, but often in pamphlets and loose papers for their readier conveyance through the kingdom. And to them must be ascribed that absolute and independent freedom which groweth so fast to the terror of all bigots. Even the dull and ignorant begin to open their eyes, and be influenced by the example and authority of so many ingenious men.

Euph. It should seem by this account that your sect extend their discoveries beyond religion; and that loyalty to his prince and reverence for the laws are but mean things in the eye of a minute philosopher.

Lys. Very mean. We are too wise to think there is anything sacred either in king or constitution, or indeed

[1] The reference is to Anthony Collins. See 'Editor's Preface to Alciphron,' and 'Advertisement,' note by Editor.

in anything else. A man of sense may perhaps seem to pay an occasional regard to his prince: but this is no more at bottom than what he pays to God, when he kneels at the sacrament to qualify himself for an office[1]. 'Fear God' and 'Honour the king' are a pair of slavish maxims, which had for a long time cramped human nature, and awed not only weak minds but even men of good understanding, till their eyes, as I observed before, were opened by our philosophers.

Euph. Methinks I can easily comprehend that when the fear of God is quite extinguished the mind must be very easy with respect to other duties, which become outward pretences and formalities, from the moment that they quit their hold upon the conscience; and conscience always supposeth the being of a God. But I still thought that Englishmen of all denominations (how widely soever they differ as to some particular points) agreed in the belief of a God, and of so much at least as is called Natural Religion.

Alc. I have already told you my own opinion of those matters, and what I know to be the opinion of many more.

Cri. Probably, Euphranor, by the title of Deists, which is sometimes given to minute philosophers, you have been misled to imagine they believe and worship a God according to the light of nature; but, by living among them, you may soon be convinced of the contrary. They have neither time, nor place, nor form of Divine worship; they offer neither prayers nor praises to God in public; and in their private practice shew a contempt or dislike even of the duties of Natural Religion. For instance, the saying grace before and after meals is a plain point of natural worship, and was once universally practised, but in proportion as this sect prevailed it hath been laid aside, not only by the minute philosophers themselves, who would be infinitely ashamed of such a weakness as to beg God's blessing or give God thanks for their daily food, but also by others who are afraid of being thought fools by the minute philosophers[2].

[1] Cf. Dial. III. sect. 2.

[2] This sentence is ridiculed by the 'Country Clergyman' ('Sporus'), in his *Remarks on the Minute Philosopher*, pp. 38–40.

Euph. Is it possible that men who really believe a God should yet decline paying so easy and reasonable a duty for fear of incurring the contempt of atheists?

Cri. I tell you there are many who, believing in their hearts the truth of religion, are yet afraid or ashamed to own it, lest they should forfeit their reputation with those who have the good luck to pass for great wits and men of genius.

Alc. O Euphranor, we must make allowance for Crito's prejudice: he is a worthy gentleman, and means well. But doth it not look like prejudice to ascribe the respect that is paid our ingenious free-thinkers rather to good luck than to merit?

Euph. I acknowledge their merit to be very wonderful, and that those authors must needs be great men who are able to prove such paradoxes: for example, that so knowing a man as a minute philosopher should be a mere machine, or at best no better than a brute.

Alc. It is a true maxim—That a man should think with the learned, and speak with the vulgar. I should be loath to place a gentleman of merit in such a light, before prejudiced or ignorant men. The tenets of our philosophy have this in common with many other truths in metaphysics, geometry, astronomy, and natural philosophy, that vulgar ears cannot bear them. All our discoveries and notions are in themselves true and certain; but they are at present known only to the better sort, and would sound strange and odd among the vulgar. But this, it is to be hoped, will wear off with time.

Euph. I do not wonder that vulgar minds should be startled at the notions of your philosophy.

Cri. Truly a very curious sort of philosophy, and much to be admired!

13. The profound thinkers of this way have taken a direct contrary course to all the great philosophers of former ages, who made it their endeavour to raise and refine human-kind, and remove it as far as possible from the brute; to moderate and subdue men's appetites; to remind them of the dignity of their nature; to awaken and improve their superior faculties, and direct them to the noblest objects; to possess men's minds with

a high sense of the Divinity, of the Supreme Good, and the Immortality of the Soul. They took great pains to strengthen the obligations to virtue; and upon all those subjects have wrought out noble theories, and treated with singular force of reason. But it seems our minute philosophers act the reverse of all other wise and thinking men; it being their end and aim to erase the principles of all that is great and good from the mind of man, to unhinge all order of civil life, to undermine the foundations of morality, and, instead of improving and ennobling our natures, to bring us down to the maxims and way of thinking of the most uneducated and barbarous nations, and even to degrade human-kind to a level with brute beasts. And all the while they would pass upon the world for men of deep knowledge. But, in effect, what is all this negative knowledge better than downright savage ignorance? That there is no Providence, no Spirit, no Future State, no Moral Duty: truly a fine system for an honest man to own, or an ingenious man to value himself upon!

Alciphron, who heard this discourse with some uneasiness, very gravely replied:—Disputes are not to be decided by the weight of authority, but by the force of reason. You may pass, indeed, general reflexions on our notions, and call them brutal and barbarous if you please: but it is such brutality and such barbarism as few could have attained to if men of the greatest genius had not broken the ice, there being nothing more difficult than to get the better of education, and conquer old prejudices. To remove and cast off a heap of rubbish that has been gathering upon the soul from our very infancy requires great courage and great strength of faculties. Our philosophers, therefore, do well deserve the name of *esprits forts*, *men of strong heads*, *free-thinkers*, and such like appellations, betokening great force and liberty of mind. It is very possible the heroic labours of these men may be represented (for what is not capable of misrepresentation?) as a piratical plundering[1], and stripping the mind of its wealth and ornaments, when it is in truth divesting it only of its prejudices, and reducing it to its untainted original state of nature. Oh nature! the genuine beauty of pure nature!

[1] Cf. sect 10.

Euph. You seem very much taken with the beauty of nature. Be pleased to tell me, Alciphron, what those things are which you esteem *natural*, or by what mark I may know them.

14. *Alc.* For a thing to be natural, for instance, to the mind of man, it must appear originally therein; it must be universally in all men; it must be invariably the same in all nations and ages. These limitations of *original*, *universal*, and *invariable* exclude all those notions found in the human mind which are the effect of custom and education[1]. The case is the same with respect to all other species of beings. A cat, for example, hath a natural inclination to pursue a mouse, because it agrees with the forementioned marks. But, if a cat be taught to play tricks, you will not say those tricks are natural. For the same reason, if upon a plum-tree peaches and apricots are engrafted, nobody will say they are the natural growth of the plum-tree.

Euph. But to return to *man*. It seems you allow those things alone to be natural to him which show themselves upon his first entrance into the world; to wit, the senses, and such passions and appetites as are discovered upon the first application of their respective objects.

Alc. That is my opinion.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, if from a young apple-tree, after a certain period of time, there should shoot forth leaves, blossoms, and apples; would you deny these things to be natural, because they did not discover and display themselves in the tender bud?

Alc. I would not.

Euph. And suppose that in a man, after a certain season, the appetite of lust, or the faculty of reason, shall shoot

[1] The *marks* for distinguishing the genuine constituent principles of human nature from prejudices apt to be mistaken for them, are discussed in this and the following section. This is obviously a cardinal inquiry in philosophical method and criticism. Are those judgments only to be esteemed *natural* which shew themselves in infancy, in all men, and in the same form in all; and must faith in Moral Government and in a Future Life be pronounced irrational prejudices, if we find that, unlike the bodily appetites, they are of gradual growth, and undeveloped in some men? — Cf. Berkeley's *Discourse of Passive Obedience*, sect. 4–12.

forth, open, and display themselves, as leaves and blossoms do in a tree; would you, therefore, deny them to be natural to him, because they did not appear in his original infancy?

Alc. I acknowledge I would not.

Euph. It seems, therefore, that the first mark of a thing's being natural to the mind was not warily laid down by you; to wit, that it should appear originally in it.

Alc. It seems so.

Euph. Again, inform me, Alciphron, whether you do not think it natural for an orange-plant tree to produce oranges?

Alc. I do.

Euph. But plant it in the north end of Great Britain, and it shall with care produce, perhaps, a good salad; in the southern parts of the same island, it may, with much pains and culture, thrive and produce indifferent fruit; but in Portugal or Naples it will produce much better, with little or no pains. Is this true or not?

Alc. It is true.

Euph. The plant being the same in all places doth not produce the same fruit—sun, soil, and cultivation making a difference.

Alc. I grant it.

Euph. And, since the case is, you say, the same with respect to all species, why may we not conclude, by a parity of a reason, that things may be natural to human-kind, and yet neither found in all men, nor invariably the same where they are found?

Alc. Hold, Euphranor, you must explain yourself further. I shall not be over hasty in my concessions.

Lys. You are in the right, Alciphron, to stand upon your guard. I do not like these ensnaring questions.

Euph. I desire you to make no concessions in complaisance to me, but only to tell me your opinion upon each particular, that we may understand one another, know wherein to agree, and proceed jointly in finding out the truth. But (added Euphranor, turning to Crito and me) if the gentlemen are against a free and fair inquiry, I shall give them no further trouble.

Alc. Our opinions will stand the test. We fear no trial; proceed as you please.

Euph. It seems then that, from what you have granted,

it should follow things may be natural to men, although they do not actually shew themselves in all men, nor in equal perfection; there being as great difference of culture, and every other advantage, with respect to human nature, as is to be found with respect to the vegetable nature of plants, to use your own similitude; is it so or not?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Answer me, Alciphron, do not men in all times and places, when they arrive at a certain age, express their thoughts by speech?

Alc. They do.

Euph. Should it not seem, then, that language is natural?

Alc. It should.

Euph. And yet there is a great variety of languages?

Alc. I acknowledge there is.

Euph. From all this will it not follow a thing may be natural and yet admit of variety?

Alc. I grant it will.

Euph. Should it not seem, therefore, to follow that a thing may be natural to mankind, though it have not those marks or conditions assigned; though it be not original, universal, and invariable?

Alc. It should.

Euph. And that, consequently, religious worship and civil government may be natural to man, notwithstanding they admit of sundry forms and different degrees of perfection?

Alc. It seems so.

Euph. You have granted already that reason is natural to mankind.

Alc. I have.

Euph. Whatever, therefore, is agreeable to reason is agreeable to the nature of man.

Alc. It is.

Euph. Will it not follow from hence that truth and virtue are natural to man?

Alc. Whatever is reasonable I admit to be natural.

Euph. And, as those fruits which grow from the most generous and mature stock, in the choicest soil, and with the best culture, are most esteemed; even so ought we not to think those sublime truths, which are the fruits of mature thought, and have been rationally deduced by

men of the best and most improved understandings, to be the choicest productions of the rational nature of man? And, if so, being in fact reasonable, natural, and true, they ought not to be esteemed unnatural whims, errors of education, and groundless prejudices, because they are raised and forwarded by manuring and cultivating our tender minds, because they take early root, and sprout forth betimes by the care and diligence of our instructors?

Alc. Agreed, provided still they may be rationally deduced: but to take this for granted of what men vulgarly call the Truths of Morality and Religion, would be begging the question.

Euph. You are in the right: I do not, therefore, take for granted that they are rationally deduced. I only suppose that, if they are, they must be allowed natural to man; or, in other words, agreeable to, and growing from, the most excellent and peculiar part of human nature.

Alc. I have nothing to object to this.

Euph. What shall we think then of your former assertions—that nothing is *natural* to man but what may be found in all men, in all nations and ages of the world; that, to obtain a genuine view of human nature, we must extirpate all the effects of education and instruction, and regard only the senses, appetites, and passions, which are to be found originally in all mankind; that, therefore, the notion of a God can have no foundation in nature, as not being originally in the mind, nor the same in all men? Be pleased to reconcile these things with your late concessions, which the force of truth seems to have extorted from you[1].

15. *Alc.* Tell me, Euphranor, whether truth be not one and the same, uniform, invariable thing: and, if so, whether the many different and inconsistent notions which men entertain of God and duty be not a plain proof there is no truth in them?

Euph. That truth is constant and uniform I freely own, and that consequently opinions repugnant to each other cannot all be true: but I think it will not hence follow they

[1] Butler's *Sermons*—Preface, and the 'Sermons on Human Nature'—in which he explains 'following nature,' and living 'naturally,' may be compared with this section.

ıt the
are all alike false. If, among various opinion ısons,
same thing, one be grounded on clear and evid s they
that is to be thought true, and others only so pplied
consist with it. Reason is the same, and rig places.
will lead to the same conclusions, in all times soned
Socrates, two thousand years ago, seems to hav ained
himself into the same notion of a God which is ' that
by the philosophers of our days, if you will emark
name to any who are not of your sect[1]. And gainst
of Confucius, that a man should guard in his yo gainst
lust, in manhood against faction, and in old as in
covetousness, is as current morality in Eur
China. ought

Alc. But still it would be a satisfaction if all m ainty.
the same way; difference of opinions implying u cause

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, what you take to b
of a lunar eclipse? n the

Alc. The shadow of the earth interposing be
sun and moon.

Euph. Are you sure of this?

Alc. Undoubtedly.

Euph. Are all mankind agreed in this truth? people

Alc. By no means. Ignorant and barbar
assign different ridiculous causes of this appear about

Euph. It seems, then, there are different opin
the nature of an eclipse?

Alc. There are. ue.

Euph. And nevertheless one of these opinions

Alc. It is. thing,

Euph. Diversity, therefore, of opinions abou of the
doth not hinder that the thing may be, and o
opinions concerning it may be true?

Alc. I acknowledge it. ıment

Euph. It should seem, therefore, that your ınions
against the belief of a God, from the variety of how
about His nature, is not conclusive. Nor do I gious
you can conclude against the truth of any moral o same
tenet, from the various opinions of men upon orical
subject. Might not a man as well argue, that no ferent
account of a matter of fact can be true, when

[1] 'of your sect'—'atheists,' in the first edition.

relations are given of it? Or, may we not as well infer that, because the several sects of philosophy maintain different opinions, none of them can be in the right; not even the *minute philosophers* themselves?

During this conversation *Lysicles* seemed uneasy, like one that wished in his heart there was no God. Alciphron, said he, methinks you sit by very tamely, while Euphranor saps the foundation of our tenets.

Be of good courage, replied *Alciphron*: a skilful gamester has been known to ruin his adversary by yielding him some advantage at first. I am glad, said he, turning to Euphranor, that you are drawn in to argue, and make your appeals to reason. For my part, wherever reason leads I shall not be afraid to follow. Know then, Euphranor, that I freely give up what you now contend for. I do not value the success of a few crude notions thrown out in a loose discourse, any more than the Turks do the loss of that vile infantry they place in the front of their armies, for no other end but to waste the powder, and blunt the swords of their enemies. Be assured I have in reserve a body of other guess arguments, which I am ready to produce. I will undertake to prove——

Euph. O Alciphron! I do not doubt your faculty of proving. But, before I put you to the trouble of any farther proofs, I should be glad to know whether the notions of your minute philosophy are worth proving; I mean, whether they are of use and service to mankind.

16. *Alc.* As to that, give me leave to tell you, a thing may be useful to one man's views, and not to another's: but truth is truth, whether useful or not, and must not be measured by the convenience of this or that man, or party of men.

Euph. But is not the general good of mankind to be regarded as a rule and measure of moral truths, of all such truths as direct or influence the moral actions of men[1]?

Alc. That point is not clear to me. I know, indeed,

[1] The *Discourse of Passive Obedience* may be compared with this and the two following Dialogues, for illustrating Berkeley's criterion of truth in morality.

that legislators, and divines, and politicians have always alleged, that it is necessary to the well-being of mankind that they should be kept in awe by the slavish notions of religion and morality [1]. But, granting all this, how will it prove these notions to be true? Convenience is one thing, and truth is another. A genuine philosopher, therefore, will overlook all advantages, and consider only truth itself as such.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, is your genuine philosopher a wise man, or a fool?

Alc. Without question, the wisest of men.

Euph. Which is to be thought the wise man, he who acts with design, or he who acts at random?

Alc. He who acts with design.

Euph. Whoever acts with design, acts for some end: doth he not?

Alc. He doth.

Euph. And a wise man for a good end?

Alc. True.

Euph. And he sheweth his wisdom in making choice of fit means to obtain his end?

Alc. I acknowledge it.

Euph. By how much, therefore, the end proposed is more excellent, and by how much fitter the means employed are to obtain it, so much the wiser is the agent to be esteemed?

Alc. This seems to be true.

Euph. Can a rational agent propose a more excellent end than happiness?

Alc. He cannot.

Euph. Of good things, the greater good is most excellent?

Alc. Doubtless.

Euph. Is not the general happiness of mankind a greater good than the private happiness of one man, or of some certain men?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Is it not therefore the most excellent end?

Alc. It seems so.

[1] 'The moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride.' *Fable of the Bees.*

Euph. Are not then those who pursue this end, by the properest methods, to be thought the wisest men?

Alc. I grant they are.

Euph. Which is a wise man governed by, wise or foolish notions?

Alc. By wise, doubtless.

Euph. It seems then to follow, that he who promotes the general well-being of mankind, by the proper necessary means, is truly wise, and acts upon wise grounds.

Alc. It should seem so.

Euph. And is not folly of an opposite nature to wisdom?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Might it not therefore be inferred, that those men are foolish who go about to unhinge such principles as have a necessary connexion with the general good of mankind?

Alc. Perhaps this might be granted: but at the same time I must observe that it is in my power to deny it.

Euph. How! you will not surely deny the conclusion, when you admit the premises?

Alc. I would fain know upon what terms we argue; whether in this progress of question and answer, if a man makes a slip, it be utterly irretrievable? For, if you are on the catch to lay hold of every advantage, without allowing for surprise or inattention, I must tell you this is not the way to convince my judgment.

Euph. O Alciphron! I aim not at triumph, but at truth. You are therefore at full liberty to unravel all that hath been said, and to recover or correct any slip you have made. But then you must distinctly point it out: otherwise it will be impossible ever to arrive at any conclusion.

Alc. I agree with you upon these terms jointly to proceed in search of truth, for to that I am sincerely devoted. In the progress of our present inquiry, I was, it seems, guilty of an oversight, in acknowledging the general happiness of mankind to be a greater good than the particular happiness of one man. For in fact the individual happiness of every man alone constitutes his own entire good. The happiness of other men, making no part of mine, is not with respect to me a good: I mean a true natural good. It cannot therefore be a reasonable end to be proposed by me, in truth and nature (for I do not speak of political

pretences), since no wise man will pursue an end which doth not concern him. This is the voice of nature. O nature! thou art the fountain, original, and pattern of all that is good and wise.

Euph. You would like then to follow nature, and propose her as a guide and pattern for your imitation?

Alc. Of all things.

Euph. Whence do you gather this respect for nature?

Alc. From the excellency of her productions.

Euph. In a vegetable, for instance, you say there is use and excellency; because the several parts of it are so connected and fitted to each other as to protect and nourish the whole, make the individual grow, and propagate the kind; and because in its fruits or qualities it is adapted to please the sense, or contribute to the benefit of man.

Alc. Even so.

Euph. In like manner, do you not infer the excellency of animal bodies from observing the frame and fitness of their several parts, by which they mutually conspire to the well-being of each other as well as of the whole? Do you not also observe a natural union and consent between animals of the same kind; and that even different kinds of animals have certain qualities and instincts whereby they contribute to the exercise, nourishment, and delight of each other? Even the inanimate unorganized elements seem to have an excellence relative to each other. Where was the excellency of water, if it did not cause herbs and vegetables to spring from the earth, and put forth flowers and fruits? And what would become of the beauty of the earth, if it was not warmed by the sun, moistened by water, and fanned by air? Throughout the whole system of the visible and natural world, do you not perceive a mutual connexion and correspondence of parts? And is it not from hence that you frame an idea of the perfection, and order, and beauty of nature?

Alc. All this I grant.

Euph. And have not the Stoics heretofore said (who were no more bigots than you are), and did you not yourself say, this pattern of order was worthy of the imitation of rational agents?

Alc. I do not deny this to be true.

Euph. Ought we not, therefore, to infer the same union, order, and regularity in the moral world that we perceive to be in the natural?

Alc. We ought.

Euph. Should it not therefore seem to follow, that reasonable creatures were, as the philosophical Emperor[1] observes, made one for another; and, consequently, that *man* ought not to consider himself as an independent individual, whose happiness is not connected with that of other men; but rather as a part of a whole, to the common good of which he ought to conspire, and order his ways and actions suitably, if he would live according to nature?

Alc. Supposing this to be true, what then?

Euph. Will it not follow that a wise man should consider and pursue his private good, with regard to, and in conjunction with that of other men? In granting of which, you thought yourself guilty of an oversight. Though, indeed, the sympathy of pain and pleasure, and the mutual affections by which mankind are knit together have been always allowed a plain proof of this point: and though it was the constant doctrine of those who were esteemed the wisest and most thinking men among the ancients, as the Platonists, Peripatetics, and Stoics; to say nothing of Christians, whom you pronounce to be an unthinking, prejudiced sort of people[2].

Alc. I shall not dispute this point with you.

Euph. Since, therefore, we are so far agreed, should it not seem to follow from the premises—that the belief of a God, of a future state, and of moral duties are the only wise, right, and genuine principles of human conduct, in case they have a necessary connexion with the well-being of mankind? This conclusion you have been led to by your own concessions, and by the analogy of nature.

Alc. I have been drawn into it step by step through several preliminaries, which I cannot well call to mind;

[1] [M. Antonin. Lib. IV.]—AUTHOR.

[2] This implies Berkeley's moral Ideal, and the root of his Social Idealism—that each man ought not to consider himself an independent individual, but rather as 'part of a whole, to the common good of which he ought to conspire,' if he would live 'according to nature.' The happiness of mankind, being a greater good than the happiness of any one man, ought accordingly to be the chief end of human actions.

but one thing I observe, that you build on the necessary connexion those principles have with the well-being of mankind, which is a point neither proved nor granted.

Lys. This I take to be a grand fundamental prejudice, as I doubt not, if I had time, I could make appear. But it is now late, and we will, if you think fit, defer this subject till to-morrow[1].

Upon which motion of Lysicles, we put an end to our conversation for that evening.

[1] The *Country Clergyman*, ('Sporus') complains that in this section Euphranor 'puzzles and perplexes the question.'

THE SECOND DIALOGUE[1].

1. Vulgar error, that vice is hurtful. 2. The benefit of drunkenness, gaming, and whoring. 3. Prejudice against vice wearing off. 4. Its usefulness illustrated in the instances of Callicles and Telesilla. 5. The reasoning of Lysicles in behalf of vice examined. 6. Wrong to punish actions, when the doctrines whence they flow are tolerated. 7. Hazardous experiment of the minute philosophers. 8. Their doctrine of circulation and revolution. 9. Their sense of a reformation. 10. Riches alone not the public weal. 11. Authority of minute philosophers: their prejudice against religion. 12. Effects of luxury: virtue, whether notional? 13. Pleasure of sense. 14. What sort of pleasure most natural to man. 15. Dignity of human nature. 16. Pleasure mistaken. 17. Amusements, misery, and cowardice of minute philosophers. 18. Rakes cannot reckon. 19. Abilities and success of minute philosophers. 20. Happy effects of the minute philosophy in particular instances. 21. Their free notions about government. 22. England the proper soil for minute philosophy. 23. The policy and address of its professors. 24. Merit of minute philosophers towards the public. 25. Their notions and character. 26. Their tendency towards popery and slavery.

1. NEXT morning Alciphron and Lysicles said the weather was so fine they had a mind to spend the day abroad, and take a cold dinner under a shade in some

[1] In this Dialogue Mandeville is represented by Lysicles; who defends the paradox—'private vices, public benefits,' popular among the men of pleasure of the time, the text in the *Fable of the Bees*, the sixth edition of which appeared in the same year as *Alciphron*. His reply to Berkeley is contained in the *Letter to Dion*.

Bernard de Mandeville was born in Holland about 1670, practised as a physician in London, and died in 1733. The *Fable of the Bees* (1702) argues for a view of morality at the opposite pole to that of Shaftesbury, whose system is the subject of discussion in the Third Dialogue, while this Dialogue is devoted to Mandeville, so that a sort of pessimism and a sort of optimism are represented in those Dialogues. Berkeley here deals with free-thought as proposing, on the ground of the public good, an unrestrained freedom of the animal man. Lysicles, the man of pleasure, is accordingly now the prominent free-thinker.

pleasant part of the country. Whereupon, after breakfast, we went down to a beach about half a mile off; where we walked on the smooth sand, with the ocean on one hand, and on the other wild broken rocks[1], intermixed with shady trees and springs of water, till the sun began to be uneasy. We then withdrew into a hollow glade, between two rocks, where we had no sooner seated ourselves than *Lysicles*, addressing himself to Euphranor, said:—I am now ready to perform what I undertook last evening, which was to shew there is nothing in that necessary connexion which some men imagine between those principles you contend for, and the public good. I freely own that if this question was to be decided by the authority of legislators or philosophers it must go against us. For those men generally take it for granted that Vice is pernicious to the public; and that men cannot be kept from vice but by the fear of God, and the sense of a Future State: whence they are induced to think the belief of such things necessary to the well-being of human-kind. This false notion hath prevailed for many ages in the world, and done an infinite deal of mischief, being in truth the cause of religious establishments, and gaining the protection and encouragement of laws and magistrates to the clergy and their superstitions. Even some of the wisest among the ancients, who agreed with our sect in denying a Providence and the Immortality of the Soul, had nevertheless the weakness to lie under the common prejudice, that vice was hurtful to societies of men. But England hath of late produced great philosophers[2], who have undeceived the world, and

[1] The Second Beach and Hanging Rocks, Rhode Island.

[2] Mandeville is here referred to. 'It is not,' says Hutcheson, in his reply to Mandeville, 'the interest of every writer to free his words from ambiguity. "Private vices public benefits" may signify any one of these five distinct propositions:—"private vices are themselves public benefits;" or, "private vices naturally tend, as the direct and necessary means, to produce public happiness;" or, "private vices, by dexterous management of governors, may be made to tend to public happiness;" or, "private vices naturally and necessarily flow from public happiness;" or, lastly, "private vices will probably flow from public prosperity, through the present corruption of men." . . . Far be it from a candid writer to charge upon him [Mandeville] any one of these opinions more than another; for, if we treat him fairly, and compare the several parts of his works together, we shall find

proved to a demonstration that private vices are public benefits. This discovery was reserved to our times, and our sect hath the glory of it.

Cri. It is possible some men of fine understanding might in former ages have had a glimpse of this important truth; but it may be presumed they lived in ignorant times and bigoted countries, which were not ripe for such a discovery.

Lys. Men of narrow capacities and short sight, being able to see no further than one link in a chain of consequences, are shocked at small evils which attend upon vice. But those who can enlarge their view, and look through a long series of events, may behold happiness resulting from vice, and good springing out of evil in a thousand instances. To prove my point, I shall not trouble you with authorities, or far-fetched arguments, but bring you to plain matter of fact. Do but take a view of each particular vice, and trace it through its effects and consequences, and then you will clearly perceive the advantage it brings to the public[1].

2. Drunkenness[2], for instance, is by your sober moralists thought a pernicious vice; but it is for want of considering the good effects that flow from it. For, in the first place, it increases the malt tax, a principal branch of his majesty's revenue, and thereby promotes the safety, strength, and glory of the nation. Secondly, it employs a great number of hands, the brewer, the maltster, the ploughman, the dealer in hops, the smith, the carpenter, the brazier, the joiner, with all other artificers necessary to supply those enumerated with their respective instruments and utensils. All which advantages are procured from drunkenness in the vulgar way, by strong beer. This point is so clear it will admit of no dispute. But, while you are forced to allow thus much, I foresee you are ready to object against drunkenness occasioned by wine and spirits, as exporting wealth into foreign countries. But do you not reflect on the number of hands which even this sets on work at

no ground for such a charge.'—(*Remarks upon the Fable of the Bees.*) In Mandeville's *Letter to Dion*, pp. 36–38, he seems to adopt the third of those propositions, and adds that by 'happiness' he intends temporal happiness only.

[1] This of Lysicles is almost a quotation from the *Fable of the Bees.*

[2] See *Fable of the Bees*, 'Remark' G, where the author tries to shew the tendency of drunkenness to increase wealth.

home: the distillers, the vintners, the merchants, the sailors, the shipwrights, with all those who are employed towards victualling and fitting out ships, which upon a nice computation will be found to include an incredible variety of trades and callings. Then, for freighting our ships to answer these foreign importations, all our manufacturers throughout the kingdom are employed, the spinners, the weavers, the dyers, the wool-combers, the carriers, the packers. And the same may be said of many other manufacturers, as well as the woollen. And if it be further considered how many men are enriched by all the forementioned ways of trade and business, and the expenses of these men and their families, in all the several articles of convenient and fashionable living, whereby all sorts of trades and callings, not only at home but throughout all parts wherever our commerce reaches, are kept in employment; you will be amazed at the wonderfully-extended scene of benefits which arises from the single vice of drunkenness, so much run down and declaimed against by all grave reformers.

With as much judgment your half-witted folk are accustomed to censure gaming[1]. And indeed (such is the ignorance and folly of mankind) a gamester and a drunkard are thought no better than public nuisances, when in truth they do each in their way greatly conduce to the public benefit. If you look only on the surface and first appearance of things, you will no doubt think playing at cards a very idle and fruitless occupation. But dive deeper, and you shall perceive this idle amusement employs the card-maker, and he sets the paper-mills at work, by which the poor rag-man is supported; not to mention the builders and workers in wood and iron that are employed in erecting and furnishing those mills. Look still deeper, and you shall find that candles and chair-hire employ the industrious and the poor, who, by these means, come to be relieved by sharpers and gentlemen, who would not give one penny in charity. But, you will say that many gentlemen and ladies are ruined by play, without considering that what one man loses another gets, and that, consequently, as many are made as ruined:

[1] See *Fable of the Bees*, 'Remark' E, on the advantages of gambling, making it an article in social morality.

money changeth hands, and in this circulation the life of business and commerce consists. When money is spent, it is all one to the public who spends it. Suppose a fool of quality becomes the dupe of a man of mean birth and circumstance who has more wit. In this case what harm doth the public sustain? Poverty is relieved, ingenuity is rewarded, the money stays at home, and has a lively circulation, the ingenious sharper being enabled to set up an equipage and spend handsomely, which cannot be done without employing a world of people. But you will perhaps object that a man reduced by play may be put upon desperate courses, hurtful to the public. Suppose the worst, and that he turns highwayman; such men have a short life and a merry. While he lives, he spends, and for one that he robs makes twenty the better for his expense. And, when his time is come, a poor family may be relieved by fifty or a hundred pounds set upon his head. A vulgar eye looks on many a man as an idle or mischievous fellow, whom a true philosopher, viewing in another light, considers as a man of pleasant occupation, who diverts himself, and benefits the public, and that with so much ease that he employs a multitude of men, and sets an infinite machine in motion, without knowing the good he does, or even intending to do any: which is peculiar to that gentleman-like way of doing good by vice.

I was considering play, and that insensibly led me to the advantages which attend robbing on the highway. Oh the beautiful and never-enough-admired connexion of vices! It would take too much time to shew how they all hang together, and what an infinite deal of good takes its rise from every one of them. One word for a favourite vice, and I shall leave you to make out the rest yourself, by applying the same way of reasoning to all other vices. A poor girl, who might not have the spending of half-a-crown a week in what you call an honest way, no sooner hath the good fortune to be a kept-mistress, but she employs milliners, laundresses, tire-women, mercers, and a number of other trades, to the benefit of her country. It would be endless to trace and pursue every particular vice through its consequences and effects, and shew the vast advantage they all are of to the public. The true springs that actuate the great machine of com-

merce, and make a flourishing state, have been hitherto little understood. Your moralists and divines have for so many ages been corrupting the genuine sense of mankind, and filling their heads with such absurd principles, that it is in the power of few men to contemplate real life with an unprejudiced eye. And fewer still have sufficient parts and sagacity to pursue a long train of consequences, relations, and dependences, which must be done in order to form a just and entire notion of the public weal. But, as I said before, our sect hath produced men capable of these discoveries, who have displayed them in full light, and made them public for the benefit of their country.

3. Oh! said *Euphranor*, who heard this discourse with great attention, you, Lysicles, are the very man I wanted, eloquent and ingenious, knowing in the principles of your sect, and willing to impart them. Pray tell me, do these principles find an easy admission in the world?

Lys. They do among ingenious men and people of fashion, though you will sometimes meet with strong prejudices against them in the middle sort, an effect of ordinary talents and mean breeding.

Euph. I should wonder if men were not shocked at notions of such a surprising nature, so contrary to all laws, education, and religion.

Lys. They would be shocked much more if it had not been for the skilful address of our philosophers, who, considering that most men are influenced by names rather than things, have introduced a certain polite way of speaking, which lessens much of the abhorrence and prejudice towards vice.

Euph. Explain me this.

Lys. Thus, in our dialect, a vicious man is a man of pleasure, a sharper is one that plays the whole game, a lady is said to have an affair, a gentleman to be a gallant, a rogue in business to be one that knows the world. By this means, we have no such things as sots, debauchees, whores, rogues, or the like, in the *beau monde*, who may enjoy their vices without incurring disagreeable appellations.

Euph. Vice then is, it seems, a fine thing with an ugly name.

Lys. Be assured it is.

Euph. It should seem then that Plato's fearing lest youth might be corrupted by those fables which represented the gods vicious was an effect of his weakness and ignorance[1].

Lys. It was, take my word for it.

Euph. And yet Plato had kept good company, and lived in a court! And Cicero, who knew the world well, had a profound esteem for him[2].

Cri. I tell you, Euphranor, that Plato and Tully might perhaps make a figure in Athens or Rome: but, were they to revive in our days, they would pass but for underbred pedants, there being at most coffee-houses in London several able men who could convince them they knew nothing in, what they are valued so much for, morals and politics.

Lys. How many long-headed men do I know, both in the court-end and the city, with five times Plato's sense, who care not one straw what notions their sons have of God or virtue.

4. *Cri.* I can illustrate this doctrine of Lysicles by examples that will make you perceive its force. Cleophon, a minute philosopher, took strict care of his son's education, and entered him betimes in the principles of his sect. Callicles (that was his son's name), being a youth of parts, made a notable progress; insomuch that before he became of age he killed his old covetous father with vexation, and ruined the estate he left behind him; or, in other words, made a present of it to the public, spreading the dunghill collected by his ancestors over the face of the nation, and making out of one overgrown estate several pretty fortunes for ingenious men, who live by the vices of the great. Telesilla, though a woman of quality and spirit, made no figure in the world, till she was instructed by her husband in the tenets of minute philosophy, which he wisely thought would prevent her giving anything in charity. From that time, she took a turn towards expensive diversions, particularly deep play, by which means she soon transferred a considerable share of his fortune to several acute men skilled in that mystery, who wanted it more, and circulated

[1] See *Republic*, Bk. II. [2] See *Tuscul. Quæst.* I. 17.

it quicker, than her husband would have done, who in return hath got an heir to his estate, having never had a child before. The same Telesilla, who was good for nothing as long as she believed her catechism, now shines in all public places, is a lady of gallantry and fashion, and has, by her extravagant parade in lace and fine clothes, raised a spirit of expense in other ladies, very much to the public benefit, though it must be owned to the mortification of many frugal husbands.

While Crito related these facts with a grave face, I could not forbear smiling, which *Lysicles* observing—Superficial minds, said he, may perhaps find something to ridicule in these accounts; but all who are masters of a just way of thinking must needs see that those maxims, the benefit whereof is universal, and the damage only particular to private persons or families, ought to be encouraged in a wise commonwealth.

For my part, said *Euphranor*, I confess myself to be rather dazzled and confounded than convinced by your reasoning; which, as you observed yourself, taking in the connexion of many distant points, requires great extent of thought to comprehend it. I must therefore entreat you to bear with my defects; suffer me to take to pieces what is too big to be received at once. And, where I cannot keep pace with you, permit me to follow you step by step, as fast as I can.

Lys. There is reason in what you say. Every one cannot suddenly take a long concatenation of arguments.

Euph. Your several arguments seem to centre in this: that vice circulates money and promotes industry[1], which cause a people to flourish. Is it not so?

Lys. It is.

Euph. And the reason that vice produceth this effect, is, because it causeth an extravagant consumption; which is the most beneficial to the manufactures, their encouragement consisting in a quick demand and high price?

Lys. True.

Euph. Hence you think a drunkard most beneficial to the brewer and the vintner, as causing a quick consumption of liquor, inasmuch as he drinks more than other men?

[1] See *Fable of the Bees*, 'Remarks,' passim.

Lys. Without doubt.

Euph. Say, Lysicles, who drinks most, a sick man or a healthy?

Lys. A healthy.

Euph. And which is healthier, a sober man or a drunkard?

Lys. A sober man.

Euph. A sober man, therefore, in health may drink more than a drunkard when he is sick?

Lys. He may.

Euph. What think you, will a man consume more meat and drink in a long life or a short one?

Lys. In a long.

Euph. A sober healthy man, therefore, in a long life, may circulate more money by eating and drinking, than a glutton or drunkard in a short one?

Lys. What then?

Euph. Why then it should seem that he may be more beneficial to the public, even in this way of eating and drinking.

Lys. I shall never own that temperance is the way to promote drinking.

Euph. But you will own sickness lessens, and death puts an end to all drinking? The same argument will hold, for aught I can see, with respect to all other vices that impair men's health and shorten their lives. And, if we admit this, it will not be so clear a point that vice hath merit towards the public[1].

Lys. But, admitting that some artificers or traders might be as well encouraged by the sober men as the vicious; what shall we say of those who subsist altogether by vice and vanity?

Euph. If such there are, may they not be otherwise employed without loss to the public? Tell me, Lysicles, is there anything in the nature of vice, as such, that renders it a public blessing, or is it only the consumption it occasions?

Lys. I have already shewn how it benefits the nation by the consumption of its manufactures.

Euph. And you have granted that a long and healthy

[1] In Hutcheson's *Remarks upon the Fable of the Bees*, p. 61, similar reasoning is employed.

life consumes more than a short and sickly one; and you will not deny that many consume more than one? Upon the whole then, compute and say, which is most likely to promote the industry of his countrymen, a virtuous married man with a healthy numerous offspring, and who feeds and clothes the orphans in his neighbourhood, or a fashionable rake about town? I would fain know whether money spent innocently doth not circulate as well as that spent upon vice? And, if so, whether by your own rule it doth not benefit the public as much?

Lys. What I have proved, I proved plainly, and there is no need of more words about it.

Euph. You seem to me to have proved nothing, unless you can make it out that it is impossible to spend a fortune innocently. I should think the public weal of a nation consists in the number and good condition of its inhabitants; have you anything to object to in this?

Lys. I think not.

Euph. To this end which would most conduce, the employing men in open air and manly exercise, or in a sedentary business within doors?

Lys. The former, I suppose.

Euph. Should it not seem, therefore, that building, gardening, and agriculture would employ men more usefully to the public than if tailors, barbers, perfumers, distillers, and such arts were multiplied?

Lys. All this I grant; but it makes against you. For, what moves men to build and plant but vanity, and what is vanity but vice?

Euph. But, if a man should do those things for his convenience or pleasure, and in proportion to his fortune, without a foolish ostentation, or overrating them beyond their due value, they would not then be the effect of vice; and how do you know but this may be the case?

Cri. One thing I know, that the readiest way to quicken that sort of industry, and employ carpenters, masons, smiths, and all such trades, would be to put in practice the happy hint of a celebrated minute philosopher[1], who, by profound thinking, has discovered that burning the city of London would be no such bad action as silly prejudiced

[1] Mandeville, who refers to this thrust in his *Letter to Dion*, p. 4.

people might possibly imagine ; inasmuch as it would produce a quick circulation of property, transferring it from the rich to the poor, and employing a great number of artificers of all kinds. This, at least, cannot be denied, that it hath opened a new way of thinking to our incendiaries, of which the public hath of late begun to reap the benefit.

Euph. I cannot sufficiently admire this ingenious thought.

6. But methinks it would be dangerous to make it public.

Cri. Dangerous to whom ?

Euph. In the first place to the publisher.

Cri. That is a mistake ; for the notion hath been published and met with due applause, in this most wise and happy age of free-thinking, free-speaking, free-writing, and free-acting.

Euph. How may a man then publish and practise such things with impunity ?

Cri. To speak the truth, I am not so clear as to the practical part. An unlucky accident now and then befals an ingenious man. The minute philosopher Magirus, being desirous to benefit the public, by circulating an estate possessed by a near relation who had not the heart to spend it, soon convinced himself, upon these principles, that it would be a very worthy action to dispatch out of the way such a useless fellow, to whom he was next heir. But, for this laudable attempt, he had the misfortune to be hanged by an underbred judge and jury. Could anything be more unjust ?

Euph. Why unjust ?

Cri. Is it not unjust to punish actions, when the principles from which they directly follow are tolerated and applauded by the public ? Can anything be more inconsistent than to condemn in practice what is approved in speculation ? Truth is one and the same ; it being impossible a thing should be practically wrong and speculatively right. Thus much is certain, Magirus was perfect master of all this theory, and argued most acutely about it with a friend of mine, a little before he did the fact for which he died.

Lys. The best of it is the world every day grows wiser ;

[[1] though it must be owned, the writers of our sect have not yet shaken off all respect for human laws, whatever they may do as to divine. It seems they venture no further, than to recommend an inward principle of vice, operating under an outward restraint of human laws.

Cri. That writer who considers man only as an instrument of passion, who absolves him from all ties of conscience and religion, and leaves him no law to respect or fear but the law of the land, is to be sure a public benefit.] You mistake, Euphranor, if you think the minute philosophers idle theorists; they are men of practical views.

Euph. As much as I love liberty, I should be afraid to live among such people; it would be, as Seneca somewhere expresseth it, *in libertate bellis ac tyrannis sæviore.*

Lys. What do you mean by quoting Plato and Seneca? Can you imagine a free-thinker is to be influenced by the authority of such old-fashioned writers?

Euph. You, Lysicles, and your friend, have often quoted to me ingenious moderns, profound fine gentlemen, with new names of authors in the minute philosophy, to whose merits I am a perfect stranger. Suffer me in my turn to cite such authorities as I know, and have passed for many ages upon the world.

7. But, authority apart, what do you say to experience? My observation can reach as far as a private family; and some wise men have thought a family may be considered as a small kingdom, or a kingdom as a great family. Do you admit this to be true?

Lys. If I say *yes*, you will make an inference; and if I say *no*, you will demand a reason. The best way is to say nothing at all. There is, I see, no end of answering.

Euph. If you give up the point you undertook to prove, there is an end at once: but, if you hope to convince me, you must answer my questions, and allow me the liberty to argue and infer.

Lys. Well, suppose I admit that a kingdom may be considered as a great family.

Euph. I shall ask you then, whether ever you knew private families thrive by those vices you think so beneficial to the public?

[1] The words within brackets were added in the second edition.

Lys. Suppose I have not.

Euph. Might not a man therefore, by a parity of reason, suspect their being of that benefit to the public?

Lys. Fear not; the next age will thrive and flourish.

Euph. Pray tell me, Lysicles; suppose you saw a fruit of a new untried kind; would you recommend it to your own family to make a full meal of?

Lys. I would not.

Euph. Why then would you try upon your own country these maxims which were never admitted in any other?

Lys. The experiment must begin somewhere; and we are resolved our own country shall have the honour and advantage of it.

Euph. O Lysicles! hath not old England subsisted for many ages without the help of your notions?

Lys. She has.

Euph. And made some figure?

Lys. I grant it.

Euph. Why then should you make her run the risk of a new experiment, when it is certain she may do without it?

Lys. But we would make her do better. We would produce a change in her that never was seen in any nation.

Euph. Sallust observes[1] that a little before the downfall of the Roman greatness avarice (the effect of luxury) had erased the good old principles of probity and justice, had produced a contempt for religion, and made everything venal; while ambition bred dissimulation, and caused men to unite in clubs and parties, not from honourable motives, but narrow and interested views. The same historian observes[2] of that great free-thinker Catiline, that he made it his business to insinuate himself into the acquaintance of young men, whose minds, unimproved by years and experience, were more easily seduced. I know not how it happens, but these passages have occurred to my thoughts more than once during this conversation.

Lys. Sallust was a sententious pedant.

Euph. But consult any historian, look into any writer. See, for instance, what Xenophon and Livy say of Sparta and Rome, and then tell me if vice be not the likeliest way to ruin and enslave a people.

[1] *Catilina*, 10. [2] *Ibid.* 16.

Lys. When a point is clear by its own evidence, I never think it worth while to consult old authors about it.

Cri. It requires much thought and delicate observation to go to the bottom of things. But one who hath come at truth with difficulty can impart it with ease. I will, therefore, Euphranor, explain to you in three words (what none of your old writers ever dreamt of)—the true cause of ruin to those states. You must know that vice and virtue, being opposite and contradictory principles, both working at once in a state, will produce contrary effects, which intestine discord must needs tend to the dissolution and ruin of the whole. But it is the design of our minute philosophers, by making men wicked upon principle, a thing unknown to the ancients, so to weaken and destroy the force of virtue that its effects shall not be felt in the public. In which case, vice being uncontrolled, without let or impediment of principle, pure and genuine, without allay of virtue, the nation must doubtless be very flourishing and triumphant.

Euph. Truly, a noble scheme!

Cri. And in a fair way to take effect. For, our young proficients in the minute philosophy, having, by a rare felicity of education, no tincture of bigotry or prejudice, do far outgo the old standers and professors of the sect; who, though men of admirable parts, yet, having had the misfortune to be imbued in their childhood with some religious notions, could never after get entirely rid of them; but still retain some small grains of conscience and superstition, which are a check upon the noblest genius. In proof of this, I remember that the famous minute philosopher, old Demodicus, came one day from conversation upon business with Timander, a young gentleman of the same sect, full of astonishment. I am surprised, said he, to see so young, and withal so complete a villain; and, such was the force of prejudice, spoke of Timander with abhorrence, not considering that he was only the more egregious and profound philosopher of the two.

8. *Euph.* Though much may be hoped from the unprejudiced education of young gentlemen, yet it seems we are not to expect a settled and entire happiness, before vice reigns pure and unmixed: till then, much is to be feared from the dangerous struggle between vice and

virtue, which may perchance overturn and dissolve this government, as it hath done others.

Lys. No matter for that, if a better comes in its place. We have cleared the land of all prejudices towards government or constitution, and made them fly like other phantasms before the light of reason and good sense. Men who think deeply cannot see any reason why power should not change hands as well as property; or why the fashion of a government should not be changed as easy as that of a garment. The perpetual circulating and revolving of wealth and power, no matter through what or whose hands, is that which keeps up life and spirit in a state[1]. Those who are even slightly read in our philosophy, know that of all prejudices, the silliest is an attachment to forms.

Cri. To say no more upon so clear a point, the overturning of a government may be justified upon the same principles as the burning a town, would produce parallel effects, and equally contribute to the public good. In both cases, the natural springs of action are forcibly exerted; and, in this general industry, what one loses another gets, a quick circulation of wealth and power making the sum total to flourish.

Euph. And do the minute philosophers publish these things to the world?

Lys. It must be confessed our writers proceed in Politics with greater caution than they think necessary with regard to Religion.

Cri. But those things plainly follow from their principles, and are to be admitted for the genuine doctrine of the sect, expressed perhaps with more freedom and perspicuity than might be thought prudent by those who would manage the public, or not offend weak brethren.

Euph. And pray, is there not need of caution, a rebel or incendiary being characters that many men have a prejudice against?

Lys. Weak people of all ranks have a world of absurd prejudices.

Euph. But the better sort, such as statesmen and legislators; do you think they have not the same indisposition towards admitting your principles?

[1] See *Fable of the Bees*, 'Remarks' G, I, L, N.

Lys. Perhaps they may; but the reason is plain.

Cri. This puts me in mind of that ingenious philosopher, the gamester Glaucus, who used to say, that statesmen and law-givers may keep a stir about right and wrong, just and unjust, but that, in truth, property of every kind had so often passed from the right owners by fraud and violence that it was now to be considered as lying on the common, and with equal right belonged to every one that could seize it.

Euph. What are we to think then of laws and regulations relating to right and wrong, crimes and duties?

Lys. They serve to bind weak minds, and keep the vulgar in awe: but no sooner doth a true genius arise, but he breaks his way to greatness through all the trammels of duty, conscience, religion, law; to all which he sheweth himself infinitely superior.

9. *Euph.* You are, it seems, for bringing about a thorough reformation?

Lys. As to what is commonly called the Reformation, I could never see how or wherein the world was the better for it. It is much the same as Popery, with this difference, that it is the more prude-like and disagreeable thing of the two. A noted writer of ours [1] makes it too great a compliment, when he computes the benefit of hooped petticoats to be nearly equal to that of the Reformation. Thorough reformation is thorough liberty. Leave nature at full freedom to work her own way, and all will be well. This is what we aim at, and nothing short of this can come up to our principles.

Crito, who is a zealous protestant, hearing these words, could not refrain. The worst effect of the Reformation, said he, was the rescuing wicked men from a darkness which kept them in awe. This, as it hath proved, was holding out light to robbers and murderers. Light in itself is good, and the same light which shews a man the folly of superstition, might shew him the truth of religion, and the madness of atheism. But, to make use of light only to see the evils on one side, and never to see, but to run blindly upon the worst extreme—this is to make

[1] Mandeville in the *Fable of the Bees.*

the best of things produce evil, in the same sense as you prove the worst of things to produce good, to wit, accidentally or indirectly: and, by the same method of arguing, you may prove that even diseases are useful: but whatever benefit seems to accrue to the public, either from disease of mind or body, is not their genuine offspring, and may be obtained without them.

Lysicles was a little disconcerted by the affirmative air of Crito; but, after a short pause, replied briskly, That to contemplate the public good was not every one's talent.

True, said *Euphranor*, I question whether every one can frame a notion of the public good, much less judge of the means to promote it.

10. But you, Lysicles, who are master of this subject, will be pleased to inform me, whether the public good of a nation doth not imply the particular good of its individuals?

Lys. It doth.

Euph. And doth not the good or happiness of a man consist in having both soul and body sound and in good condition, enjoying those things which their respective natures require, and free from those things which are odious or hurtful to them?

Lys. I do not deny all this to be true.

Euph. Now, it should seem worth while to consider, whether the regular decent life of a virtuous man may not as much conduce to this end as the mad sallies of intemperance and debauchery.

Lys. I will acknowledge that a nation may merely subsist, or be kept alive, but it is impossible it should flourish without the aid of vice. To produce a quick circulation of traffic and wealth in a state, there must be exorbitant and irregular motions in the appetites and passions[1].

[1] 'The worst of all the multitude
Did something for the common good;
This was the State's-craft that maintained
The whole, of which each part complained.
This, as in music harmony,
Made jarrings in the main agree;
Parties directly opposite
Assist each other, as 'twere for spite;
And temperance with sobriety

Euph. The more people a nation contains, and the happier those people are, the more that nation may be said to flourish. I think we are agreed in this point.

Lys. We are.

Euph. You allow then that riches are not an ultimate end, but should only be considered as the means to procure happiness?

Lys. I do.

Euph. It seems that means cannot be of use without our knowing the end, and how to apply them to it?

Lys. It seems so.

Euph. Will it not follow that in order to make a nation flourish it is not sufficient to make it wealthy, without knowing the true end and happiness of mankind, and how to apply wealth towards attaining that end. In proportion as these points are known and practised, I think the nation should be likely to flourish. But, for a people who neither know nor practise them, to gain riches seems to me the same advantage that it would be for a sick man to come at plenty of meat and drink, which he could not use but to his hurt.

Lys. This is mere sophistry; it is arguing without persuading. Look into common life; examine the pursuits of men: have a due respect for the consent of the world; and you will soon be convinced that riches alone are sufficient to make a nation flourishing and happy. Give them riches and they will make themselves happy, without that political invention, that trick of statesmen and philosophers, called virtue.

11. *Euph.* Virtue then, in your account, is a trick of statesmen?

Lys. It is.

Euph. Why then do your sagacious sect betray and

Serve drunkenness and gluttony.
The root of evil, avarice,
That damned, ill-natur'd, baneful vice,
Was slave to prodigality,
That noble sin; whilst luxury
Employed a million of the poor,
And odious pride a million more;
Envy itself, and vanity,
Were ministers of industry,'
&c.
The Grumbling Hive.

See relative 'Remarks' in *Fable of the Bees.*

divulge that trick or secret of state, which wise men have judged necessary for the good government of the world?

Lysicles hesitating, *Crito* made answer, That he presumed it was because their sect, being wiser than all other wise men, disdained to see the world governed by wrong maxims, and would set all things on a right bottom.

Euph. Thus much is certain. If we look into all institutions of government, and the political writings of such as have heretofore passed for wise men, we shall find a great regard for virtue.

Lys. You shall find a strong tincture of prejudice; but, as I said before, consult the multitude if you would find nature and truth.

Euph. But, among country gentlemen, and farmers, and the better sort of tradesmen, is not virtue a reputable thing?

Lys. You pick up authorities among men of low life and vile education.

Euph. Perhaps we ought to pay a decent respect to the authority of minute philosophers.

Lys. And I would fain know whose authority should be more considered than that of those gentlemen, who are alone above prejudice, and think for themselves.

Euph. How doth it appear that you are the only unprejudiced part of mankind? May not a minute philosopher, as well as another man, be prejudiced in favour of the leaders of his sect? May not an atheistical education prejudice towards atheism? What should hinder a man's being prejudiced against religion, as well as for it? Or can you assign any reason why an attachment to pleasure, interest, vice, or vanity, may not be supposed to prejudice men against virtue?

Lys. This is pleasant. What! suppose those very men influenced by prejudice who are always disputing against it, whose constant aim it is to detect and demolish prejudices of all kinds!

Except their own, replied *Crito*; for, you must pardon me if I cannot help thinking they have some small prejudice, though not in favour of virtue.

12. I observe, Lysicles, that you allowed to Euphranor[1], the greater number of happy people there are in a state, the more that state may be said to flourish: it follows, therefore, that such methods as multiply inhabitants are good, and such as diminish them are bad, for the public. And one would think nobody need be told, that the strength of a state consists more in the number and sort of people than in anything else. But, in proportion as vice and luxury, those public blessings encouraged by this minute philosophy, prevail among us, fewer are disposed to marry, too many being diverted by pleasure, disabled by disease, or frightened by expense. Nor doth vice only thin a nation, but also debaseth it by a puny degenerate race. I might add that it is ruinous to our manufactures; both as it makes labour dear, and thereby enables our more frugal neighbours to undersell us: and also as it diverts the lower sort of people from honest callings to wicked projects. If these and such considerations were taken into account, I believe it would be evident to any man in his senses that the imaginary benefits of vice bear no proportion to the solid real woes that attend it.

Lysicles, upon this, shook his head, and smiled at Crito, without vouchsafing any answer. After which, addressing himself to Euphranor, There cannot, said he, be a stronger instance of prejudice than that a man should at this time of day preserve a reverence for that idol Virtue, a thing so effectually exposed and exploded by the most knowing men of the age, who have shewn that a man is a mere engine, played upon and driven about by sensible objects; and that moral virtue is only a name, a notion, a chimera, an enthusiasm, or at best a fashion, uncertain and changeable, like all other fashions[2].

Euph. What do you think, Lysicles, of health; doth it depend on fancy and caprice, or is it something real in the bodily composition of a man?

Lys. Health is something real, which results from the right constitution and temperature of the organs and the fluids circulating through them.

Euph. This you say is health of body?

[1] Cf. sect. 10.

[2] 'In morals there is no greater certainty than in Fashions.'—*Fable of the Bees.*

Lys. It is.

Euph. And may we not suppose a healthy constitution of soul, when the notions are right, the judgments true, the will regular, the passions and appetites directed to their proper objects, and confined within due bounds? This, in regard to the soul, seems what health is to the body. And the man whose mind is so constituted, is he not properly called virtuous? And to produce this healthy disposition in the minds of his countrymen, should not every good man employ his endeavours? If these things have any appearance of truth, as to me they seem to have, it will not then be so clear a point that virtue is a mere whim or fashion, as you are pleased to represent it—I must own something unexpectedly, after what had been discoursed in last evening's conference, which, if you would call to mind, might perhaps save both of us some trouble.

Lys. Would you know the truth, Euphranor? I must own I have quite forgot all your discourse about virtue, duty, and all such points, which, being of an airy notional nature, are apt to vanish, and leave no trace on a mind accustomed only to receive impression from realities.

13. Having heard these words, *Euphranor* looked at Crito and me, and said, smiling, I have mistaken my part; it was mine to learn, and his to instruct. Then, addressing himself to Lysicles, Deal faithfully, said he, and let me know, whether the *public* benefit of vice be in truth that which makes you plead for it?

Lys. I love to speak frankly what I think. Know then that *private* interest is the first and principal consideration with philosophers of our sect. Now of all interests pleasure is that which hath the strongest charms, and no pleasures like those which are heightened and enlivened by licence. Herein consists the peculiar excellency of our principles, that they shew people how to serve their country by diverting themselves, causing the two streams of public spirit and self-love to unite and run in the same channel. I have told you already that I admit a nation might subsist by the rules of virtue. But, give me leave to say, it will barely subsist, in a dull joyless insipid state; whereas the sprightly excesses of vice inspire men with joy. And

where particulars rejoice, the public, which is made up of particulars, must do so too: that is, the public must be happy. This I take to be an irrefragable argument. But, to give you its full force, and make it as plain as possible, I will trace things from their original. Happiness [1] is the end to which created beings naturally tend [1]; but we find that all animals, whether men or brutes, do naturally and principally pursue real pleasure of sense; which is therefore to be thought their supreme good, their true end and happiness. It is for this men live; and whoever understands life must allow that man to enjoy the top and flower of it who hath a quick sense of pleasure, and withal spirit, skill, and fortune sufficient to gratify every appetite and every taste. Niggards and fools will envy or traduce such a one because they cannot equal him. Hence all that sober trifling in disparagement of what every one would be master of if he could—a full freedom and unlimited scope of pleasure.

Euph. Let me see whether I understand you. Pleasure of sense, you say, is the chief pleasure?

Lys. I do.

Euph. And this would be cramped and diminished by virtue?

Lys. It would.

Euph. Tell me, Lysicles, is pleasure then at the height when the appetites are satisfied?

Lys. There is then only an indolence, the lively sense of pleasure being past.

Euph. It should seem, therefore, that the appetites must be always craving, to preserve pleasure alive?

Lys. That is our sense of the matter.

Euph. The Greek philosopher, therefore, was in the right, who considered the body of a man of pleasure as a leaky vessel, always filling and never full.

Lys. You may divert yourself with allegories, if you please. But all the while ours is literally the true taste of nature. Look throughout the universe, and you shall find birds and fishes, beasts and insects, all kinds of animals, with which the creation swarms, constantly engaged by instinct in the pursuit of sensible pleasure.

[1] See Aristotle's *Nichom. Ethics,* I. 4-7, X. 1-7; Cicero, *De Finibus,* I. 11.

And shall man alone be the grave fool who thwarts, and crosses, and subdues his appetites, whilst his fellow-creatures do all most joyfully and freely indulge them?

Euph. How! Lysicles! I thought that being governed by the senses, appetites, and passions was the most grievous slavery; and that the proper business of free-thinkers, or philosophers, had been to set men from the power of ambition, avarice, and sensuality!

Lys. You mistake the point. We make men relish the world, attentive to their interests, lively and luxurious in their pleasures, without fear or restraint either from God or man. We despise those preaching writers, who used to disturb or cramp the pleasures and amusements of human life. We hold that a wise man who meddles with business doth it altogether for his interest, and refers his interest to his pleasure. With us it is a maxim, that a man should seize the moments as they fly. Without love, and wine, and play, and late hours we hold life not to be worth living. I grant, indeed, that there is something gross and ill-bred in the vices of mean men, which the genteel philosopher abhors.

Cri. But to cheat, whore, betray, get drunk, do all these things decently, this is true wisdom, and elegance of taste.

14. *Euph.* To me, who have been used to another way of thinking, this new philosophy seems difficult to digest. I must, therefore, beg leave to examine its principles with the same freedom that you do those of other sects.

Lys. Agreed.

Euph. You say, if I mistake not, that a wise man pursues only his private interest, and that this consists in sensual pleasure; for proof whereof you appeal to nature. Is not this what you advance?

Lys. It is.

Euph. You conclude, therefore, that, as other animals are guided by natural instinct, man too ought to follow the dictates of sense and appetite?

Lys. I do.

Euph. But in this do you not argue as if man had only sense and appetite for his guides; on which supposition there might be truth in what you say? But what if he

hath intellect, reason, a higher instinct and a nobler life[1]? If this be the case, and you, being man, live like a brute, is it not the way to be defrauded of your true happiness? to be mortified and disappointed? Consider most sort of brutes, you shall perhaps find them have a greater share of sensual happiness than man.

Lys. To our sorrow we do. This hath made several gentlemen of our sect envy brutes, and lament the lot of human-kind.

Cri. It was a consideration of this sort which inspired Erotylus with the laudable ambition of wishing himself a snail, upon hearing of certain particularities discovered in that animal by a modern virtuoso.

Euph. Tell me, Lysicles, if you had an inexhaustible fund of gold and silver, should you envy another for having a little more copper than you?

Lys. I should not.

Euph. Are not reason, imagination, and sense, faculties differing in kind, and in rank higher one than another?

Lys. I do not deny it.

Euph. Their acts therefore differ in kind?

Lys. They do.

Euph. Consequently the pleasures perfective of those acts are also different.

Lys. They are.

Euph. You admit, therefore, three sorts of pleasure:— pleasure of reason, pleasure of imagination, and pleasure of sense.

Lys. I do.

Euph. And, as it is reasonable to think the operation of the highest and noblest faculty to be attended with the highest pleasure, may we not suppose the two former to be as gold or silver, and the latter only as copper? whence it should seem to follow that man need not envy or imitate a brute.

Lys. And, nevertheless, there are very ingenious men who do. And surely every one may be allowed to know what he wants, and wherein his true happiness consists.

Euph. Is it not plain that different animals have different pleasures? Take a hog from his ditch or dunghill, lay

[1] See Butler's *Sermons*, Preface.

him on a rich bed, treat him with sweetmeats, and music, and perfumes. All these things will be no entertainment to him. Do not a bird, a beast, a fish amuse themselves in various manners, insomuch that what is pleasing to one may be death to another? Is it ever seen that one of those animals quits its own element or way of living, to adopt that of another? and shall man quit his own nature to imitate a brute?

Lys. But sense is not only natural to brutes; is it not also natural to man?

Euph. It is, but with this difference: it maketh the whole of a brute, but is the lowest part or faculty of a human soul. The nature of anything is peculiarly that which doth distinguish it from other things, not what it hath in common with them. Do you allow this to be true?

Lys. I do.

Euph. And is not reason that which makes the principal difference between man and other animals?

Lys. It is.

Euph. Reason, therefore, being the principal part of our nature, whatever is most reasonable should seem most natural to man. Must we not therefore think rational pleasures more agreeable to human-kind than those of sense? Man and beast, having different natures, seem to have different faculties, different enjoyments, and different sorts of happiness. You can easily conceive, that the sort of life which makes the happiness of a mole or a bat would be a very wretched one for an eagle. And may you not as well conceive that the happiness of a brute can never constitute the true happiness of a man? A beast, without reflexion or remorse, without foresight, or appetite of immortality, without notion of vice or virtue, or order, or reason, or knowledge! What motive, what grounds, can there be for bringing down man, in whom are all these things, to a level with such a creature? What merit, what ambition, in the minute philosopher to make such an animal a guide or rule for human life[1]?

[1] Cf. Dial. I. sect. 14, on the notions and beliefs which are to be esteemed *natural* to man—which constitute practical reason, being agreeable to, or developed from, its constituent elements.

15. *Lys.* It is strange, Euphranor, that one who admits freedom of thought, as you do, should yet be such a slave to prejudice. You still talk of order and virtue, as of real things, as if our philosophers had never demonstrated that they have no foundation in nature, and are only the effects of education.

I know, said *Crito*, how the minute philosophers are accustomed to demonstrate this point. They consider the animal nature of man, or man so far forth as he is animal[1]; and it must be owned that, considered in that light, he hath no sense of duty, no notion of virtue. He, therefore, who should look for virtue among mere animals, or mankind as such, would look in the wrong place. But that philosopher who is attentive only to the animal part of his being, and raiseth his theories from the very dregs of our species, might probably, upon second thoughts, find himself mistaken.

Look you, Crito, said *Lysicles*, my argument is with Euphranor; to whom addressing his discourse:—I observe, said he, that you stand much upon the dignity of human nature. This thing of dignity is an old worn-out notion, which depends on other notions, old and stale, and worn-out, such as an immaterial spirit, and a ray derived from the Divinity. But in these days men of sense make a jest of all this grandeur and dignity; and many there are would gladly exchange their share of it for the repose, and freedom, and sensuality of a brute. But comparisons are odious; waiving therefore all inquiry concerning the respective excellencies of man and beast, and whether it is beneath a man to follow or imitate brute animals, in judging of the chief good, and conduct of life and manners, I shall be content to appeal to the authority of men themselves for the truth of my notions. Do but look abroad into the world, and ask the common run of men, whether pleasure of sense be not the only true, solid, substantial good of their kind?

Euph. But might not the same vulgar sort of men prefer a piece of sign-post painting to one of Raphael's, or a Grub-street ballad to an ode of Horace? Is there not a real difference between good and bad writing?

[1] Cf. sect. 14.

Lys. There is.

Euph. And yet you will allow there must be a maturity and improvement of understanding to discern this difference, which doth not make it therefore less real?

Lys. I will.

Euph. In the same manner, what should hinder but there may be in nature a true difference between vice and virtue, although it require some degree of reflexion and judgment to observe it? In order to know whether a thing be agreeable to the rational nature of man, it seems one should rather observe and consult those who have most employed or improved their reason.

Lys. Well, I shall not insist on consulting the common herd of mankind. From the ignorant and gross vulgar, I might myself appeal in many cases to men of rank and fashion.

Euph. They are a sort of men I have not the honour to know much of by my own observation. But I remember a remark of Aristotle, who was himself a courtier, and knew them well. 'Virtue,' saith he[1], 'and good sense are not the property of high birth or a great estate. Nor if they who possess these advantages, wanting a taste for rational pleasure, betake themselves to those of sense, ought we therefore to esteem them eligible, any more than we should the toys and pastimes of children, because they seem so to them?'—And indeed one may be allowed to question whether the truest estimate of things was to be expected from a mind intoxicated with luxury, and dazzled with the splendour of high living.

> Cum stupet insanis acies fulgoribus, et cum
> Acclinis falsis animus meliora recusat.—HOR.

Crito upon this observed that he knew an English nobleman[2] who in the prime of life professeth a liberal art, and is the first man of his profession in the world; and that

[1] [*Ethic. ad Nicom.* Lib. X. c. vi.] —AUTHOR.

[2] Probably Richard Boyle, third Earl of Burlington, famed for architectural taste. Pope introduced Berkeley, on his return from the Continent, to Lord Burlington, who, as we are told by Stock, 'conceived a high esteem for him on account of his great taste and skill in architecture; an art of which his lordship was an excellent judge and patron, and which Mr. Berkeley had made his particular study while in Italy.'

he was very sure he had more pleasure from the exercise of that elegant art than from any sensual enjoyment within the power of one of the largest fortunes and most bountiful spirits in Great Britain.

16. *Lys.* But why need we have recourse to the judgment of other men in so plain a case? I appeal to your own breast, consult that, and then say if sensible pleasure be not the chief good of man.

Euph. I, for my part, have often thought those pleasures which are highest in the esteem of sensualists, so far from being the chiefest good, that it seemed doubtful, upon the whole, whether they were any good at all, any more than the mere removal of pain. Are not our wants and appetites uneasy?

Lys. They are.

Euph. Doth not sensual pleasure consist in satisfying them?

Lys. It doth.

Euph. But the cravings are tedious, the satisfaction momentary. Is it not so?

Lys. It is; but what then?

Euph. Why then it should seem that sensual pleasure is but a short deliverance from long pain. A long avenue of uneasiness leads to a point of pleasure, which ends in disgust or remorse.

Cri. And he who pursues this *ignis fatuus* imagines himself a philosopher and free-thinker.

Lys. Pedants are governed by words and notions, while the wiser men of pleasure follow fact, nature, and sense.

Cri. But what if notional pleasures should in fact prove the most real and lasting? Pure pleasures of reason and imagination neither hurt the health, nor waste the fortune, nor gall the conscience. By them the mind is long entertained without loathing or satiety. On the other hand, a notion (which with you it seems passeth for nothing) often embitters the most lively sensual pleasures; which at bottom will be found also to depend upon notion more than perhaps you imagine: it being a vulgar remark, that those things are more enjoyed by hope and foretaste of the soul than by possession. Thus much is yielded, that the actual enjoyment is very short, and the alternative of appetite and disgust long as well as uneasy. So that,

upon the whole, it should seem those gentlemen who are called men of pleasure, from their eager pursuit of it, do in reality, with great expense of fortune, ease, and health, purchase pain.

Lys. You may spin out plausible arguments, but will after all find it a difficult matter to convince me that so many ingenious men should not be able to distinguish between things so directly opposite as pain and pleasure. How is it possible to account for this?

Cri. I believe a reason may be assigned for it, but to men of pleasure no truth is so palatable as a fable. Jove once upon a time having ordered that pleasure and pain should be mixed in equal proportions in every dose of human life; upon a complaint that some men endeavoured to separate what he had joined, and taking more than their share of the sweet, would leave all the sour for others, commanded Mercury to put a stop to this evil, by fixing on each delinquent a pair of invisible spectacles, which should change the appearance of things, making pain look like pleasure, and pleasure like pain, labour like recreation, and recreation like labour. From that time the men of pleasure are eternally mistaking and repenting.

Lys. If your doctrine takes place, I would fain know what can be the advantage of a great fortune, which all mankind so eagerly pursue.

Cri. It is a common saying with Eucrates that *a great fortune is an edged tool*, which a hundred may come at for one who knows how to use it, so much easier is the art of getting than that of spending. What its advantage is I will not say, but I will venture to declare what it is not. I am sure that where abundance excludes want, and enjoyment prevents appetites, there is not the quickest sense of those pleasures we have been speaking of, in which the footman hath often a greater share than his lord, who cannot enlarge his stomach in proportion to his estate.

17. Reasonable and well-educated men of all ranks have, I believe, pretty much the same amusements, notwithstanding the difference of their fortunes: but those who are particularly distinguished as men of pleasure seem to possess it in a very small degree.

Euph. I have heard that among persons of that character a game of cards is esteemed a chief diversion.

Lys. Without cards there could be no living for people of fashion. It is the most delightful way of passing an evening when gentlemen and ladies are got together, who would otherwise be at a loss what to say or do with themselves. But a pack of cards is so engaging that it doth not only employ them when they are met, but serves to draw them together. Quadrille gives them pleasure in prospect during the dull hours of the day, they reflect on it with delight, and it furnishes discourse when it is over.

Cri. One would be apt to suspect these people of condition pass their time but heavily, and are but little the better for their fortunes, whose chief amusement is a thing in the power of every porter or footman, who is as well qualified to receive pleasure from cards as a peer. I can easily conceive that, when people of a certain turn are got together, they should prefer doing anything to the ennui of their own conversation; but it is not easy to conceive there is any great pleasure in this. What a card-table can afford requires neither parts nor fortune to judge of.

Lys. Play is a serious amusement, that comes to the relief of a man of pleasure, after the more lively and affecting enjoyments of sense. It kills time beyond anything; and is a most admirable anodyne to divert or prevent thought, which might otherwise prey upon the mind.

Cri. I can easily comprehend that no man upon earth ought to prize anodynes for the spleen more than a man of fashion and pleasure. An ancient sage, speaking of one of that character, saith he is made wretched by disappointments and appetites, λυπεῖται ἀποτυγχάνων καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν. And if this was true of the Greeks, who lived in the sun, and had so much spirit, I am apt to think it is still more so of our modern English. Something there is in our climate and complexion that makes idleness nowhere so much its own punishment as in England, where an uneducated fine gentleman pays for his momentary pleasures, with long and cruel intervals of spleen: for relief of which he is driven into sensual excesses, that produce a proportionable depression of spirits, which, as it createth a greater want of pleasures, so it lessens the ability to enjoy them. There

is a cast of thought in the complexion of an Englishman, which renders him the most unsuccessful rake in the world. He is (as Aristotle expresseth it) at variance with himself[1]. He is neither brute enough to enjoy his appetites, nor man enough to govern them. He knows and feels that what he pursues is not his true good; his reflexion serving only to shew him that misery which his habitual sloth and indolence will not suffer him to remedy. At length, being grown odious to himself, and abhorring his own company, he runs into every idle assembly, not from the hopes of pleasure, but merely to respite the pain of his own mind. Listless and uneasy at the present, he hath no delight in reflecting on what is past, or in the prospect of anything to come. This man of pleasure, when, after a wretched scene of vanity and woe, his animal nature is worn to the stumps, wishes and dreads death by turns, and is sick of living, without having ever tried or known the true life of man.

Euph. It is well this sort of life, which is of so little benefit to the owner, conduceth so much to that of the public. But pray tell me, do these gentlemen set up for minute philosophers?

Cri. That sect, you must know, contains two sorts of philosophers, the wet and the dry. Those I have been describing are of the former kind. They differ rather in practice than in theory. As an older, graver, or duller man, from one that is younger, and more capable or fond of pleasure. The dry philosopher passeth his time but dryly. He has the honour of pimping for the vices of more sprightly men, who in return offer some small incense to his vanity. Upon this encouragement, and to make his own mind easy when it is past being pleased, he employs himself in justifying those excesses he cannot partake in. But, to return to your question, those miserable folk are mighty men for the minute philosophy.

Euph. What hinders them then from putting an end to their lives[2]?

Cri. Their not being persuaded of the truth of what they

[1] *Magna Moralia*, II. 6.

[2] The reference is perhaps to Charles Blount (1654–93), one of the early representatives of English minute philosophy, author of the *Anima Mundi* and other works, whose death was self-inflicted. His creed was expounded after his

profess. Some, indeed, in a fit of despair, do now and then lay violent hands on themselves. And as the minute philosophy prevails, we daily see more examples of suicide. But they bear no proportion to those who would put an end to their lives if they durst. My friend Clinias, who had been one of them, and a philosopher of rank, let me into the secret history of their doubts, and fears, and irresolute resolutions of making away with themselves, which last he assures me is a frequent topic with men of pleasure, when they have drunk themselves into a little spirit. It was by virtue of this mechanical valour the renowned philosopher Hermocrates shot himself through the head[1]. The same thing hath since been practised by several others, to the great relief of their friends. Splenetic, worried, and frightened out of their wits, they run upon their doom with the same courage as a bird runs into the mouth of a rattle-snake, not because they are bold to die, but because they are afraid to live. Clinias endeavoured to fortify his irreligion by the discourse and opinion of other minute philosophers, who were mutually strengthened in their unbelief by his. After this manner, authority working in a circle, they endeavoured to atheize one another. But, though he pretended even to a demonstration against the being of a God, yet he could not inwardly conquer his own belief. He fell sick, and acknowledged this truth, is now a sober man and a good Christian; owns he was never so happy as since he has become such, nor so wretched as while he was a minute philosopher. And he who has tried both conditions may be allowed a proper judge of both.

Lys. Truly a fine account of the brightest and bravest men of the age!

Cri. Bright and brave are fine attributes. But our curate is of opinion that all you free-thinking rakes are either fools or cowards. Thus he argues: if such a man doth not see his true interest, he wants sense; if he doth, but dare not pursue it, he wants courage. In this manner,

death by his friend Charles Gildon, in his *Oracles of Reason*, which appeared in 1695.

[1] In the *Philosophical Dissertation upon Death, composed for the consolation of the unhappy* (1732), license in morals, and the occasional expediency of suicide, is vindicated. So also in the Preface to Gildon's *Oracles of Reason*.

from the defect of sense and courage, he deduceth that whole species of men, who are so apt to value themselves upon both those qualities.

Lys. As for their courage, they are at all times ready to give proof of it; and for their understanding, thanks to nature, it is of a size not to be measured by country parsons.

18. *Euph.* But Socrates, who was no country parson, suspected your men of pleasure were such through ignorance.

Lys. Ignorance of what?

Euph. Of the art of computing. It was his opinion that rakes cannot reckon[1]. And that for want of this skill they make wrong judgments about pleasure, on the right choice of which their happiness depends.

Lys. I do not understand you.

Euph. Do you grant that sense perceiveth only sensible things?

Lys. I do.

Euph. Sense perceiveth only things present?

Lys. This too I grant.

Euph. Future pleasures, therefore, and pleasures of the understanding are not to be judged of by actual sense?

Lys. They are not.

Euph. Those therefore who judge of pleasure by sense may find themselves mistaken at the foot of the account.

> Cum lapidosa cheragra
> Fregerit articulos veteris ramalia fagi,
> Tum crassos transisse dies lucemque palustrem,
> Et sibi jam seri vitam ingemuere relictam[2].

To make a right computation, should you not consider all the faculties, and all the kinds of pleasure, taking into your account the future as well as the present, and rating them all according to their true value?

Cri. The Epicureans themselves allowed that pleasure which procures a greater pain, or hinders a greater pleasure, should be regarded as a pain; and, that pain which procures a greater pleasure, or prevents a greater pain, is to be accounted a pleasure[3]. In order therefore to make

[1] [Plato in Protag.]—AUTHOR.

[2] [Persius, Sat. V.]—AUTHOR.

[3] Cicero, *De Finibus*, I. And some modern Utilitarians are fain

a true estimate of pleasure, the great spring of action, and that from whence the conduct of life takes its bias, we ought to compute intellectual pleasures and future pleasures, as well as present and sensible; we ought to make allowance, in the valuation of each particular pleasure, for all the pains and evils, for all the disgust, remorse, and shame, that attend it; we ought to regard both kind and quantity, the sincerity, the intenseness, and the duration of pleasures.

[[1] Let a free-thinker but bethink himself, how little of human pleasure consists in actual sensation, and how much in prospect. Let him then compare the prospect of a virtuous believer with that of an unbelieving rake.]

Euph. And, all these points duly considered, will not Socrates seem to have had reason on his side, when he thought ignorance made rakes—and particularly their being ignorant of what he calls the science of more and less, greater and smaller, equality and comparison, that is to say, of the art of computing?

Lys. All this discourse seems notional. For real abilities of every kind, it is well known, we have the brightest men of the age among us. But all those who know the world do calculate that what you call a good Christian, who hath neither a large conscience, nor unprejudiced mind, must be unfit for the affairs of it. Thus you see, while you compute yourselves out of pleasure, others compute you out of business. What then are you good for with all your computation?

Euph. I have all imaginable respect for the abilities of free-thinkers. My only fear was, their parts might be too lively for such slow talents as forecast and computation, the gifts of ordinary men.

19. *Cri.* I cannot make them the same compliment that Euphranor does. For, though I shall not pretend to characterise the whole sect, yet thus much I may truly affirm—that those who have fallen in my way have been mostly raw men of pleasure, old sharpers in business, or a third sort of lazy sciolists, who are neither men of

to recognise contrasts in the *quality* as well as in the quantity of our pleasures. J. S. Mill, in his *Utilitarianism*, insists frequently upon their generic differences.

[1] Added in the author's second edition.

business, nor men of speculation, but set up for judges or critics in all kinds, without having made a progress in any. These, among men of the world, pass for profound theorists, and among speculative men would seem to know the world: a conceited race, equally useless to the affairs and studies of mankind. Such as these, for the most part, seem to be sectaries of the minute philosophy. I will not deny that now and then you may meet with a man of easy manners, that, without those faults and affectations, is carried into the party by the mere stream of education, fashion, or company; all which do in this age prejudice men against religion, even those who mechanically rail at prejudice. I must not forget that the minute philosophers have also a strong party among the beaux and fine ladies; and, as affectations out of character are often the strongest, there is nothing so dogmatical and inconvincible as one of these fine things, when it sets up for free-thinking. But, be these professors of the sect never so dogmatical, their authority must needs be small with men of sense. For who would choose for his guide, in the search for truth, a man whose thoughts and time are taken up with dress, visits, and diversions? or whose education hath been behind the counter, or in an office? or whose speculations have been employed on the forms of business, who is only well read in the ways and commerce of mankind, in stock-jobbing, purloining, supplanting, bribing? Or would any man in his senses give a fig for meditations and discoveries made over a bottle? And yet it is certain that, instead of thought, books, and study, most free-thinkers are the proselytes of a drinking club. Their principles are often settled, and decisions on the deepest points made, when they are not fit to make a bargain.

Lys. You forget our writers, Crito. They make a world of proselytes.

Cri. So would worse writers in such a cause. Alas! how few read! and of these, how few are able to judge! How many wish your notions true! How many had rather be diverted than instructed! How many are convinced by a title! I may allow your reasons to be effectual, without allowing them to be good. Arguments, in themselves of small weight, have great effect, when they are recommended by a mistaken interest, when they are

pleaded for by passion, when they are countenanced by the humour of the age; and above all, with some sort of men, when they are against law, government, and established opinions: things which, as a wise and good man would not depart from without clear evidence, a weak or a bad man will affect to disparage on the slightest grounds.

Lys. And yet the arguments of our philosophers alarm.

Cri. The force of their reasoning is not what alarms: their contempt of laws and government is alarming: their application to the young and ignorant is dangerous.

Euph. But without disputing or disparaging their talent at ratiocination, it seems very possible their success might not be owing to that alone. May it not in some measure be ascribed to the defects of others, as well as to their own perfections? My friend Eucrates used to say, that the church would thrive and flourish beyond all opposition, if some certain persons minded piety more than politics, practics than polemics, fundamentals than consectaries, substance than circumstance, things than notions, and notions than words.

Lys. Whatever may be the cause, the effects are too plain to be denied. And when a considering man observes that our notions do, in this most learned and knowing age, spread and multiply, in opposition to established laws, and every day gain ground against a body so numerous, so learned, so well supported, protected, and encouraged, for the service and defence of religion: I say, when a man observes and considers all this, he will be apt to ascribe it to the force of truth, and the merits of our cause; which, had it been supported with the revenues and establishments of the church and universities, you may guess what a figure it would make, by the figure that it makes without them.

Euph. It is much to be pitied that the learned professors of your sect do not meet with the encouragement they deserve.

Lys. All in due time. People begin to open their eyes. It is not impossible but those revenues that in ignorant times were applied to a wrong use may, hereafter, in a more enlightened age, be applied to a better.

Cri. But why professors and encouragement for what needs no teaching? An acquaintance of mine has a most ingenious footman that can neither write nor read, who

learned your whole system in half an hour: he knows when and how to nod, shake his head, smile, and give a hint, as well as the ablest sceptic, and is in fact a very minute philosopher.

Lys. Pardon me, it takes time to unlearn religious prejudices, and requires a strong head.

Cri. I do not know how it might have been once upon a time. But in the present laudable education, I know several who have been imbued with no religious notions at all; and others who have had them so very slight, that they rubbed off without the least pains.

20. Panope, young and beautiful, under the care of her aunt, an admirer of the minute philosophy, was kept from learning the principles of religion, that she might not be accustomed to believe without a reason, nor assent to what she did not comprehend. Panope was not indeed prejudiced with religious notions, but got a notion of intriguing, and a notion of play, which ruined her reputation by fourteen, and her fortune by four-and-twenty.—I have often reflected on the different fate of two brothers in my neighbourhood. Cleon, the elder, being designed an accomplished gentleman, was sent to town, and had the first part of his education in a great school: what religion he learned there was soon unlearned in a certain celebrated society, which, till we have a better, may pass for a nursery of minute philosophers. Cleon dressed well, could cheat at cards, had a nice palate, understood the mystery of the die, was a mighty man in the minute philosophy; and having shined a few years in these accomplishments, he died before thirty, childless and rotten, expressing the utmost indignation that he could not outlive that old dog his father; who, having a great notion of polite manners, and knowledge of the world, had purchased them to his favourite son with much expense, but had been more frugal in the education of Chærephon, the younger son; who was brought up at a country school, and entered a commoner in the university, where he qualified himself for a parsonage in his father's gift, which he is now possessed of, together with the estate of the family, and a numerous offspring.

Lys. A pack of unpolished cubs, I warrant.

Cri. Less polished, perhaps, but more sound, more honest, and more useful, than many who pass for fine gentlemen. Crates, a worthy justice of the peace in this country, having had a son miscarry at London, by the conversation of a minute philosopher, used to say, with a great air of complaint—If a man spoils my corn, or hurts my cattle, I have a remedy against him; but if he spoils my children I have none.

Lys. I warrant you he was for penal methods: he would have had a law to persecute tender consciences.

Cri. The tender conscience of a minute philosopher! He who tutored the son of Crates soon after did justice on himself. For he taught Lycidas, a modest young man, the principles of his sect. Lycidas, in return, debauched his daughter, an only child: upon which, Charmides (that was the minute philosopher's name) hanged himself. Old Bubalion in the city is carking, starving, and cheating, that his son may drink, game, and keep mistresses, hounds, and horses, and die in a jail. Bubalion nevertheless thinks himself wise, and passeth for one that minds the main chance. He is a minute philosopher, which learning he acquired behind the counter, from the works of Prodicus and Tryphon. This same Bubalion was one night at supper, talking against the immortality of the soul, with two or three grave citizens, one of whom the next day declared himself a bankrupt, with five thousand pounds of Bubalion's in his hands: and the night following he received a note from a servant, who had during his lecture waited at table, demanding the sum of fifty guineas to be laid under a stone, and concluding with most terrible threats and imprecations.

Lys. Not to repeat what hath been already demonstrated [1]—that the public is at bottom no sufferer by such accidents, which in truth are inconvenient only to private persons, who in their turn too may reap the benefit of them; I say, not to repeat all that hath been demonstrated on that head, I shall only ask you whether there would not be rakes and rogues, although we did not make them? Believe me, the world always was, and always will be the same, as long as men are men.

[1] Cf. sect. 2.

Cri. I deny that the world is always the same. Human nature, to use Alciphron's comparison, is like land, better or worse, as it is improved, and according to the seeds or principles sown in it. Though nobody held your tenets, I grant there might be bad men by the force of corrupt appetites and irregular passions; but, where men, to the force of appetite and passion, add that of opinion, and are wicked from principle, there will be more men wicked, and those more incurably and outrageously so. The error of a lively rake lies in his passions, and may be reformed: but the dry rogue who sets up for judgment is incorrigible. It is an observation of Aristotle's, that there are two sorts of debauchees, the ἀκρατής, and the ἀκόλαστος, of which the one is so against his judgment, the other with it[1]; and that there may be hopes of the former, but none of the latter. And in fact I have always observed, that a rake who is a minute philosopher, when grown old, becomes a sharper in business.

Lys. I could name you several such who have grown most noted patriots.

Cri. Patriots! such patriots as Catiline and Mark Anthony.

Lys. And what then? Those famous Romans were brave, though unsuccessful. They wanted neither sense nor courage; and if their schemes had taken effect, the brisker part of their countrymen had been much the better for them.

21. The wheels of government go on, though wound up by different hands; if not in the same form, yet in some other, perhaps a better. There is an endless variety in nature. Weak men, indeed, are prejudiced towards rules and systems in life and government; and think if these are gone all is gone: but a man of a great soul and free spirit delights in the noble experiment of blowing up systems and dissolving governments, to mould them anew upon other principles and in another shape. Take my word for it, there is a plastic nature in things that seeks its own end. Pull a state to pieces, jumble, confound, and shake together the particles of human society, and then

[1] See *Nicom. Ethics*, VII. 1; also Butler in his *Sermons*.

let them stand a while, and you shall soon see them settle of themselves in some convenient order, where heavy heads are lowest, and men of genius uppermost.

Euph. Lysicles speaks his mind freely.

Lys. Where was the advantage of free-thinking, if it were not attended with free-speaking; or of free-speaking, if it did not produce free-acting? We are for thorough, independent, original freedom. Inward freedom without outward is good for nothing but to set a man's judgment at variance with his practice.

Cri. This free way of Lysicles may seem new to you: it is not so to me. As the minute philosophers lay it down for a maxim—that there is nothing sacred of any kind, nothing but what may be made a jest of, exploded, and changed like the fashion of their clothes; so nothing is more frequent than for them to utter their schemes and principles, not only in select companies, but even in public.

In a certain part of the world, where ingenious men are wont to retail their speculations, I remember to have seen a valetudinarian in a long wig and a cloak, sitting at the upper end of a table, with half a dozen disciples about him. After he had talked about religion, in a manner and with an air that would make one think atheism established by law, and religion only tolerated, he entered upon civil government; and observed to his audience, that the natural world was in a perpetual circulation. Animals, said he, who draw their sustenance from the earth, mix with that same earth, and in their turn become food for vegetables, which again nourish the animal kind: the vapours that ascend from this globe descend back upon it in showers; the elements alternately prey upon each other: that which one part of nature loseth another gains; the sum total remaining always the same, being neither bigger nor lesser, better nor worse, for all these intestine changes. Even so, said this learned professor, the revolutions in the civil world are no detriment to human-kind; one part whereof rises as the other falls, and wins by another's loss. A man therefore who thinks deeply, and hath an eye on the whole system, is no more a bigot to government than to religion. He knows how to suit himself to occasions, and make the best of every event: for the rest, he looks on all translations of power and property

from one hand to another with a philosophic indifference. Our lecturer concluded his discourse with a most ingenious analysis of all political and moral virtues into their first principles and causes, shewing them to be mere fashions, tricks of state, and illusions on the vulgar.

Lys. We have been often told of the good effects of religion and learning, churches and universities: but I dare affirm that a dozen or two ingenious men of our sect have done more towards advancing real knowledge, by extemporaneous lectures, in the compass of a few years, than all the ecclesiastics put together for as many centuries.

Euph. And the nation no doubt thrives accordingly; but it seems, Crito, you have heard them discourse.

Cri. Upon hearing this, and other lectures of the same tendency, methought it was needless to establish professors for the minute philosophy in either university; while there are so many spontaneous lecturers in every corner of the streets, ready to open men's eyes, and rub off their prejudices about religion, loyalty, and public spirit.

Lys. If wishing was to any purpose, I could wish for a telescope that might draw into my view things future in time, as well as distant in place. Oh! that I could but look into the next age, and behold what it is that we are preparing to be, the glorious harvest of our principles: the spreading of which hath produced a visible tendency in the nation towards something great and new.

Cri. One thing I dare say you would expect to see, be the changes and agitations of the public what they will, that is, every free-thinker upon his legs. You are all sons of nature, who cheerfully follow the fortunes of the common mass.

Lys. And it must be owned we have a maxim—that *each should take care of one.*

Cri. Alas, Lysicles, you wrong your own character. You would feign pass upon the world, and upon yourselves, for interested cunning men: but can anything be more disinterested than to sacrifice all regards to the abstracted speculation of truth? Or can anything be more void of all cunning than to publish your discoveries

to the world, teach others to play the whole game, and arm mankind against yourselves?

22. If a man may venture to suggest so mean a thought as the love of their country to souls fired with the love of truth, and the love of liberty, and grasping the whole extent of nature; I would humbly propose it to you, gentlemen, to observe the caution practised by all other discoverers, projectors, and makers of experiments, who never hazard all on the first trial. Would it not be prudent to try the success of your principles on a small model in some remote corner? For instance, set up a colony of atheists in Monomotapa, and see how it prospers, before you proceed any farther at home: half a dozen ship-loads of minute philosophers might easily be spared upon so good a design. In the meantime, you gentlemen, who have found out that there is nothing to be hoped or feared in another life, that conscience is a bug-bear, that the bands of government and the cement of human society are rotten things, to be resolved and crumbled into nothing by the argumentation of every minute philosopher: be so good as to keep these sublime discoveries to yourselves: suffer us, our wives, our children, our servants, and our neighbours, to continue in the belief and way of thinking established by the laws of our country. In good earnest, I wish you would go try your experiments among the Hottentots or Turks.

Lys. The Hottentots we think well of, believing them to be an unprejudiced people: but it is to be feared their diet and customs would not agree with our philosophers. As for the Turks, they are bigots, who have a notion of God, and a respect for Jesus Christ; I question whether it might be safe to venture among them.

Cri. Make your experiment then in some other part of Christendom.

Lys. We hold all other Christian nations to be much under the power of prejudice: even our neighbours the Dutch are too much prejudiced in favour of their religion by law established for a prudent man to attempt innovations under their government. Upon the whole, it seems we can execute our schemes nowhere with so much security and such prospect of success as at home. Not

to say that we have already made a good progress. Oh! that we could but once see a parliament of true, staunch, libertine free-thinkers!

Cri. God forbid! I should be sorry to have such men for my servants, not to say, for my masters.

Lys. In that we differ.

23. But you will agree with me that the right way to come at this was to begin with extirpating the prejudices of particular persons. We have carried on this work for many years with much art and industry, and at first with secrecy, working like moles under ground, concealing our progress from the public, and our ultimate views from many, even of our own proselytes, blowing the coals between polemical divines, laying hold on and improving every incident which the passions and folly of churchmen afforded to the advantage of our sect. As our principles obtained, we still proceeded to farther inferences; and as our numbers multiplied, we gradually disclosed ourselves and our opinions: where we are now I need not say. We have stubbed, and weeded, and cleared human nature to that degree that, in a little time, leaving it alone without any labouring or teaching, you shall see natural and just ideas sprout forth of themselves.

Cri. But I have heard a man, who had lived long and observed much, remark, that the worst and most unwholesome weed was this same minute philosophy. We have had, said he, divers epidemical distempers in the state, but this hath produced of all others the most destructive plague. Enthusiasm had its day, its effects were violent and soon over; this infects more quietly, but spreads widely: the former bred a fever in the state; this breeds a consumption and final decay. A rebellion or an invasion alarms, and puts the public upon its defence; but a corruption of principles works its ruin more slowly perhaps, but more surely.

This may be illustrated by a fable I somewhere met with in the writings of a Swiss philosopher, setting forth the original of brandy and gunpowder. The government of the north being once upon a time vacant, the prince of the power of the air convened a council in hell, wherein, upon competition between two demons of rank, it was deter-

mined they should both make trial of their abilities, and he should succeed who did most mischief. One made his appearance in the shape of gunpowder, the other in that of brandy: the former was a declared enemy, and roared with a terrible noise, which made folks afraid, and put them on their guard; the other passed as a friend and a physician through the world, disguised himself with sweets, and perfumes, and drugs, made his way into the ladies' cabinets and the apothecaries' shops, and, under the notion of helping digestion, comforting the spirits, and cheering the heart, produced direct contrary effects; and, having insensibly thrown great numbers of human-kind into a lingering but fatal decay, was found to people hell and the grave so fast as to merit the government which he still possesses.

24. *Lys.* Those who please may amuse themselves with fables and allegories. This is plain English:—liberty is a good thing, and we are the support of liberty.

Cri. To me it seems that liberty and virtue were made for each other. If any man wish to enslave his country, nothing is a fitter preparative than vice; and nothing leads to vice so surely as irreligion. For my part, I cannot comprehend or find out, after having considered it in all lights, how this crying down religion should be the effect of honest views towards a just and legal liberty. Some seem to propose an indulgence in vice; others may have in prospect the advantage which needy and ambitious men are used to make in the ruin of a state. One may indulge a pert petulant spirit; another hope to be esteemed among libertines, when he wants wit to please, or abilities to be useful. But, be men's views what they will, let us examine what good your principles have done: who has been the better for the instructions of these minute philosophers? Let us compare what we are in respect of learning, loyalty, honesty, wealth, power, and public spirit, with what we have been. Free-thinking (as it is called) hath wonderfully grown of late years. Let us see what hath grown up with it, or what effects it hath produced. To make a catalogue of ills is disagreeable; and the only blessing it can pretend to is luxury: that same blessing which revenged the world upon old Rome; that same luxury that makes a nation,

like a diseased pampered body, look full and fat with one foot in the grave.

Lys. You mistake the matter. There are no people who think and argue better about the public good of a state than our sect; who have also invented many things tending to that end which we cannot as yet conveniently put in practice.

Cri. But one point there is from which it must be owned the public hath already received some advantage, which is the effect of your principles, flowing from them, and spreading as they do: I mean that old Roman practice of self-murder, which at once puts an end to all distress, ridding the world and themselves of the miserable.

Lys. You were pleased before to make some reflexions on this custom, and laugh at the irresolution of our free-thinkers: but I can aver for matter of fact that they have often recommended it by their example as well as arguments[1]; and that it is solely owing to them that a practice, so useful and magnanimous, hath been taken out of the hands of lunatics, and restored to that credit among men of sense which it anciently had. In whatever light you may consider it, this is in fact a solid benefit. But the best effect of our principles is that light and truth so visibly shed abroad in the world. From how many prejudices, errors, perplexities, and contradictions have we freed the minds of our fellow-subjects! How many hard words and intricate absurd notions had possessed the minds of men before our philosophers appeared in the world! But now even women and children have right and sound notions of things. What say you to this, Crito?

Cri. I say, with respect to these great advantages of destroying men and notions, that I question whether the public gains as much by the latter as it loseth by the former. For my own part, I had rather my wife and children all believed what they had no notion of, and daily pronounced words without a meaning, than that any one of them should cut his throat, or leap out of a window. Errors and nonsense, as such, are of small concern in the eyes of the public; which considers not

[1] e. g. in the *Philosophy of Death.*

the metaphysical truth of notions, so much as the tendency they have to produce good or evil. Truth itself is valued by the public, as it hath an influence, and is felt in the course of life. You may confute a whole shelf of schoolmen, and discover many speculative truths, without any great merit towards your country. But if I am not mistaken, the minute philosophers are not the men to whom we are most beholden for discoveries of that kind: this I say must be allowed, supposing, what I by no means grant, your notions to be true. For, to say plainly what I think, the tendency of your opinions is so bad that no good man can endure them, and your arguments for them so weak that no wise man will admit them.

Lys. Has it not been proved as clear as the meridian sun that the politer sort of men lead much happier lives, and swim in pleasure, since the spreading of our principles? But, not to repeat or insist further on what has been so amply deduced, I shall only add that the advantages flowing from them extend to the tenderest age and the softer sex: our principles deliver children from terrors by night, and ladies from splenetic hours by day.

Cri. [[1] Instead of these old-fashioned things, prayers and the Bible, the grateful amusements of drams, dice, and billet-doux have succeeded. The fair sex have now nothing to do but dress and paint, drink and game, adorn and divert themselves, and enter into all the sweet society of life.] I thought, Lysicles, the argument from pleasure had been exhausted. But, since you have not done with that point, let us once more, by Euphranor's rule, cast up the account of pleasure and pain, as credit and debt, under distinct articles. We will set down in the life of your fine lady rich clothes, dice, cordials, scandal, late hours, against vapours, distaste, remorse, losses at play, and the terrible distress of ill-spent age increasing every day: suppose no cruel accident of jealousy, no madness or infamy of love, yet, at the foot of the account, you shall find that empty, giddy, gaudy, fluttering thing, not half so happy as a butterfly or a grasshopper on a summer's day. And for a rake or man of pleasure, the reckoning will be

[1] The sentences within brackets were transferred from the close of the preceding speech of Lysicles to this of Crito in the author's third edition, to be read ironically.

much the same, if you place listlessness, ignorance, rottenness, loathing, craving, quarrelling, and such qualities or accomplishments, over against his little circle of fleeting amusements—long woe against momentary pleasure; and if it be considered that, when sense and appetite go off, though he seek refuge from his conscience in the minute philosophy, yet in this you will find, if you sift him to the bottom, that he affects much, believes little, knows nothing.

Upon which, *Lysicles*, turning to me, observed, that Crito might dispute against fact if he pleased, but that every one must see the nation was the merrier for their principles.

True, answered *Crito*, we are a merry nation indeed: young men laugh at the old; children despise their parents; and subjects make a jest of the government: happy effects of the minute philosophy!

25. *Lys.* Infer what effects you please: that will not make our principles less true.

Cri. Their *truth* is not what I am now considering. The point at present is the *usefulness* of your principles. And to decide this point we need only take a short view of them fairly proposed and laid together:—that there is no God or providence: that man is as the beasts that perish: that his happiness as theirs consists in obeying animal instincts, appetites, and passions: that all stings of conscience and sense of guilt are prejudices and errors of education: that religion is a state trick: that vice is beneficial to the public: that the soul of man is corporeal, and dissolveth like a flame or vapour: that man is a machine actuated according to the laws of motion: that consequently he is no agent, or subject of guilt: that a wise man will make his own particular individual interest in this present life the rule and measure of all his actions:—these, and such opinions, are, it seems, the tenets of a minute philosopher, who is himself, according to his own principles, an organ played on by sensible objects, a ball bandied about by appetites and passions: so subtle is he as to be able to maintain all this by artful reasonings; so sharp-sighted and penetrating to the very bottom of things as to find out that the most interested occult cunning is the only true wisdom. To complete his character, this curious piece

of clock-work, having no principle of action within itself, and denying that it hath or can have any one free thought or motion, sets up for the patron of liberty, and earnestly contends for *free-thinking*.

Crito had no sooner made an end but *Lysicles* addressed himself to Euphranor and me—Crito, said he, has taken a world of pains, but convinced me only of one single point, to wit, that I must despair of convincing him. Never did I in the whole course of my life meet with a man so deeply immersed in prejudice; let who will pull him out for me. But I entertain better hopes of you.

I can answer, said I, for myself, that my eyes and ears are always open to conviction: I am attentive to all that passes, and upon the whole shall form, whether right or wrong, a very impartial judgment.

Crito, said *Euphranor*, is a more enterprising man than I, thus to rate and lecture a philosopher. For my part, I always find it easier to learn than to teach. I shall therefore beg your assistance to rid me of some scruples about the tendency of your opinions; which I find myself unable to master, though never so willing. This done, though we should not tread exactly in the same steps, nor perhaps go the same road, yet we shall not run in all points diametrically opposite one to another.

26. Tell me now, Lysicles, you who are a minute observer of things, whether a shade be more agreeable at morning, or evening, or noon-day?

Lys. Doubtless at noon-day.

Euph. And what disposeth men to rest?

Lys. Exercise.

Euph. When do men make the greatest fires?

Lys. In the coldest weather.

Euph. And what creates a love for icy liquors?

Lys. Excessive heat.

Euph. What if you raise a pendulum to a great height on one side?

Lys. It will, when left to itself, ascend so much the higher on the other.

Euph. It should seem, therefore, that darkness ensues from light, rest from motion, heat from cold, and in general that one extreme is the consequence of another?

Lys. It should seem so.

Euph. And doth not this observation hold in the civil as well as natural world? Doth not power produce licence, and licence power? Do not whigs make tories, and tories whigs. Bigots make atheists, and atheists bigots[1]?

Lys. Granting this to be true.

Euph. Will it not hence follow that as we abhor slavish principles we should avoid running into licentious ones? I am and always was a sincere lover of liberty, legal English liberty; which I esteem a chief blessing, ornament, and comfort of life, and the great prerogative of an Englishman. But is it not to be feared that, upon the nation's running into a licentiousness which hath never been endured in any civilised country, men feeling the intolerable evils of one extreme may naturally fall into the other? You must allow the bulk of mankind are not philosophers, like you and Alciphron.

Lys. This I readily acknowledge.

Euph. I have another scruple about the tendency of your opinions. Suppose you should prevail, and destroy this protestant church and clergy: how could you come at the popish? I am credibly informed there is a great number of emissaries of the church of Rome disguised in England: who can tell what harvest a clergy so numerous, so subtle, and so well furnished with arguments to work on vulgar and uneducated minds, may be able to make in a country despoiled of all religion, and feeling the want of it? Who can tell whether the spirit of free-thinking ending with the opposition, and the vanity with the distinction, when the whole nation are alike infidels; who can tell, I say, whether in such a juncture the men of genius themselves may not affect a new distinction, and be the first converts to popery?

Lys. And suppose they should. Between friends it would be no great matter. These are our maxims. In the first place, we hold it would be best to have no religion at all. Secondly, we hold that all religions are indifferent. If, therefore, upon trial, we find the country cannot do without a religion, why not popery as well as another? I know several ingenious men of our sect, who, if we had

[1] Cf. Dial. V. sect. 29.

a popish prince on the throne, would turn papists to-morrow. This is a paradox, but I shall explain it. A prince whom we compliment with our religion, to be sure must be grateful.

Euph. I understand you. But what becomes of free-thinking all the while?

Lys. Oh! we should have more than ever of that, for we should keep it all to ourselves. As for the amusement of retailing it, the want of this would be largely compensated by solid advantages of another kind.

Euph. It seems then, by this account, the tendency you observed in the nation towards something great and new proves a tendency towards popery and slavery.

Lys. Mistake us not, good Euphranor. The thing first in our intention is consummate liberty: but, if this will not do, and there must after all be such things tolerated as religion and government, we are wisely willing to make the best of both.

Cri. This puts me in mind of a thought I have often had—that minute philosophers are dupes of the Jesuits. The two most avowed, professed, busy, propagators of infidelity, in all companies, and upon all occasions, that I ever met with, were both bigoted papists; and, being both men of considerable estates, suffered considerably on that score; which it is wonderful their thinking disciples should never reflect upon. Hegemon, a most distinguished writer among the minute philosophers, and hero of the sect, I am well assured, was once a papist, and never heard that he professed any other religion. I know that many of the church of Rome abroad are pleased with the growth of infidelity among us, as hoping it may make way for them. The emissaries of Rome are known to have personated several other sects, which from time to time have sprung up amongst us; and why not this of the minute philosophers, of all others the best calculated to ruin both church and state? I myself have known a Jesuit abroad talk among English gentlemen like a free-thinker. I am credibly informed that Jesuits, known to be such by the minute philosophers at home, are admitted into their clubs, and I have observed them to approve, and speak better of the Jesuits than of any other clergy whatsoever. Those who are not acquainted with the

subtle spirit, the refined politics, and wonderful economy, of that renowned society, need only read the account given of them by the Jesuit Inchofer, in his book *De Monarchiâ Solipsorum;* and those who are will not be surprised they should be able to make dupes of our minute philosophers: dupes, I say, for I can never think they suspect they are only tools to serve the ends of cunninger men than themselves. They seem to me drunk and giddy with a false notion of liberty, and spurred on by this principle to make mad experiments on their country; they agree only in pulling down all that stands in their way; without any concerted scheme, and without caring or knowing what to erect in its stead. To hear them, as I have often done, descant on the moral virtues, resolve them into shame, then laugh at shame as a weakness, admire the unconfined lives of savages[1], despise all order and decency of education—one would think the intention of these philosophers was, when they had pruned and weeded the notions of their fellow-subjects, and divested them of their prejudices, to strip them of their clothes, and fill the country with naked followers of nature, enjoying all the privileges of brutality.

Here Crito made a pause, and fixed his eyes on Alciphron, who during this whole conversation had sat thoughtful and attentive, without saying a word; and with an air one while dissatisfied at what Lysicles advanced, another serene and pleased, seeming to approve some better thought of his own. But the day being now far spent, *Alciphron* proposed to adjourn the argument till the following; when, said he, I shall set matters on a new foundation, and in so full and clear a light, as, I doubt not, will give entire satisfaction[2]. So we changed the discourse, and after a repast upon cold provisions, took a walk on the strand, and in the cool of the evening returned to Crito's.

[1] Cf. Berkeley's *Discourse addressed to Magistrates*, sect. 21.

[2] The preceding Dialogue makes Lysicles fail to prove, that free indulgence of the animal appetites is the true way to promote the public good, regard for which is taken to constitute right conduct. Alciphron accordingly promises to vindicate atheistic morality 'on a new foundation,' superior to the objections which were fatal to the paradoxical hypothesis of Lysicles.

THE THIRD DIALOGUE[1].

1. Alciphron's account of honour. 2. Character and conduct of men of honour. 3. Sense of moral beauty. 4. The honestum or τὸ καλόν of the ancients. 5. Taste for moral beauty—whether a sure guide or rule. 6. Minute philosophers ravished with the abstract beauty of virtue. 7. Their virtue alone disinterested and heroic. 8. Beauty of sensible objects—what, and how perceived. 9. The idea of beauty explained by painting and architecture. 10. Beauty of the moral system, wherein it consists. 11. It supposeth a Providence. 12. Influence of τὸ καλόν and τὸ πρέπον. 13. Enthusiasm of Cratylus compared with the sentiments of Aristotle. 14. Compared with the Stoical principles. 15. Minute philosophers, their talent for raillery and ridicule. 16. The wisdom of those who make virtue alone its own reward.

1. The following day, as we sat round the tea-table, in a summer parlour which looks into the garden, *Alciphron* after the first dish turned down his cup, and, reclining back on his chair, proceeded as follows—Above all the sects upon earth, it is the peculiar privilege of ours, not to be tied down by any principles. While other philosophers profess a servile adherence to certain tenets, ours assert a noble freedom, differing not only one from another, but

[1] The Second Dialogue having exposed the hypothesis of the utility of vice, the Third is meant to shew the insufficiency of taste, or a sense of the abstract beauty of virtue, for practical morals and regulating the actions of men: the need for faith in the omnipresence and moral government of God, in this and in a future life, is accordingly suggested.

This Dialogue discusses the ethical theory of the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), the pupil, and afterwards the critic, of Locke, who is alleged to make a sense of the *beauty* of a constant regard for the public good the foundation of virtuous conduct; independently of the endless penalties which he associates with the popular religion. Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* should be compared with this Dialogue, which is hardly fair to the ethical merit and elevated theism of a philosopher who was admired by Leibniz, and followed by Francis Hutcheson.

very often the same man from himself. Which method of proceeding, beside other advantages, hath this annexed to it, that we are of all men the hardest to confute. You may, perhaps, confute a particular tenet, but then this affects only him who maintains it, and so long only as he maintains it. Some of our sect dogmatize more than others, and in some more than other points. The doctrine of the usefulness of vice is a point wherein we are not all agreed. Some of us are great admirers of virtue. With others the points of vice and virtue are problematical. For my part, though I think the doctrine maintained yesterday by Lysicles an ingenious speculation; yet upon the whole, there are divers reasons which incline me to depart from it, and rather to espouse the virtuous side of the question; with the smallest, perhaps, but the most contemplative and laudable part of our sect. It seemeth, I say, after a nice inquiry and balancing on both sides, that we ought to prefer virtue to vice; and that such preference would contribute both to the public weal, and the reputation of our philosophers.

You are to know then, we have among us several that, without one grain of religion, are men of the nicest honour, and therefore men of virtue because men of honour. Honour is a noble unpolluted source of virtue, without the least mixture of fear, interest, or superstition. It hath all the advantages without the evils which attend religion. It is the mark of a great and fine soul, and is to be found among persons of rank and breeding. It affects the court, the senate, and the camp, and in general every rendezvous of people of fashion.

Euph. You say then that honour is the source of virtue?

Alc. I do.

Euph. Can a thing be the source of itself?

Alc. It cannot.

Euph. The source, therefore, is distinguished from that of which it is the source?

Alc. Doubtless.

Euph. Honour then is one thing, and virtue another?

Alc. I grant it. Virtuous actions are the effect, and honour is the source or cause of that effect.

Euph. Tell me. Is honour the will producing those actions, or the final cause for which they are produced;

or right reason which is their rule and limit, or the object about which they are conversant? Or do you by the word *honour* understand a faculty or appetite? all which are supposed, in one sense or other, to be the source of human actions.

Alc. Nothing of all this.

Euph. Be pleased then to give me some notion or definition of it.—*Alciphron*, having mused a while, answered, that he defined honour to be a principle of virtuous actions.

To which *Euphranor* replied :—If I understand it rightly, the word *principle* is variously taken. Sometimes by principles we mean the parts of which a whole is composed, and into which it may be resolved. Thus the elements are said to be principles of compound bodies. And thus words, syllables, and letters are the principles of speech. Sometimes by principle we mean a small particular seed, the growth or gradual unfolding of which doth produce an organised body, animal or vegetable, in its proper size and shape. Principles at other times are supposed to be certain fundamental theorems in arts and sciences, in religion and politics. Let me know in which of these senses, or whether it be in some other sense, that you understand this word, when you say—honour is a principle of virtue.

To this *Alciphron* replied, that for his part he meant it in none of those senses, but defined honour to be a certain ardour or enthusiasm that glowed in the breast of a gallant man.

Upon this, *Euphranor* observed, it was always admitted to put the definition in place of the thing defined. Is this allowed, said he, or not?

Alc. It is.

Euph. May we not therefore say, that a man of honour is a warm man, or an enthusiast?

Alciphron, hearing this, declared that such exactness was to no purpose; that pedants, indeed, may dispute and define, but could never reach that high sense of honour which distinguished the fine gentleman, and was a thing rather to be felt than explained.

2. *Crito*, perceiving that Alciphron could not bear being pressed any farther on that article, and willing to give

some satisfaction to Euphranor, said that of himself indeed he should not undertake to explain so nice a point, but he would retail to them part of a conversation he once heard between Nicander a minute philosopher and Menecles a Christian, upon the same subject, which was for substance as follows:—

M. From what principle are you gentlemen virtuous?

N. From honour. We are men of honour.

M. May not a man of honour debauch another's wife, or get drunk, or sell a vote, or refuse to pay his debts, without lessening or tainting his honour?

N. He may have the vices and faults of a gentleman: but is obliged to pay debts of honour, that is, all such as are contracted by play.

M. Is not your man of honour always ready to resent affronts and engage in duels?

N. He is ready to demand and give gentleman's satisfaction upon all proper occasions.

M. It should seem, by this account, that to ruin tradesmen, break faith to one's own wife, corrupt another man's, take bribes, cheat the public, cut a man's throat for a word, are all points consistent with your principle of honour.

N. It cannot be denied that we are men of gallantry, men of fire, men who know the world, and all that.

M. It seems therefore that honour among infidels is like honesty among pirates—something confined to themselves, and which the fraternity perhaps may find their account in, but every one else should be constantly on his guard against.

By this dialogue, continued *Crito*, a man who lives out of the *grand monde* may be enabled to form some notion of what the world calls honour, and men of honour.

Euph. I must entreat you not to put me off with Nicander's opinion, whom I know nothing of, but rather give me your own judgment, drawn from your own observation upon men of honour.

Cri. If I must pronounce, I can very sincerely assure you that, by all I have heard or seen, I could never find that honour, considered as a principle distinct from conscience, religion, reason, and virtue, was more than an empty name. And I do verily believe that those who build

upon that notion have less virtue than other men; and that what they have, or seem to have, is owing to fashion (being of the reputable kind), if not to a conscience early imbued with religious principles, and afterwards retaining a tincture from them without knowing it. These two principles seem to account for all that looks like virtue in those gentlemen. Your men of fashion, in whom animal life abounds, a sort of bullies in morality, who disdain to have it thought they are afraid of conscience—these descant much upon honour, and affect to be called men of honour, rather than conscientious or honest men. But, by all that I could ever observe, this specious character, where there is nothing of conscience or religion underneath, to give it life and substance, is no better than a meteor or painted cloud.

Euph. I had a confused notion that honour was something connected with truth; and that men of honour were the greatest enemies to all hypocrisy, fallacy, and disguise.

Cri. So far from that, an infidel, who sets up for the nicest honour, shall, without the least grain of faith or religion, pretend himself a Christian, take any test, join in any act of worship, kneel, pray, receive the sacrament, to serve an interest[1]. The same person, without any impeachment of his honour, shall most solemnly declare and promise, in the face of God and the world, that he will love his wife, and forsaking all others keep only to her, when at the same time it is certain he intends never to perform one tittle of his vow; and convinceth the whole world of this as soon as he gets her in his power, and her fortune, for the sake of which this man of untainted honour makes no scruple to cheat and lie.

Euph. We have a notion here in the country that it was of all things most odious, and a matter of much risk and hazard, to give the lie to a man of honour.

Cri. It is very true. He abhors to take the lie, but not to tell it.

3. [2]*Alciphron*, having heard all this with great composure of mind and countenance, spake as follows:—

[1] Cf. Dial. I. sect. 12.

[2] Alciphron here personates Shaftesbury as Shaftesbury was conceived by Berkeley.

[[1] The word Free-thinker, as it comprehends men of very different sorts of sentiments, cannot in a strict sense, be said to constitute one particular sect, holding a certain system of positive and distinct opinions. Though it must be owned we do all agree in certain points of unbelief, or negative principles, which agreement, in some sense, unites us under the common idea of one sect. But then those negative principles as they happen to take root in men of different age, temper, and education, do produce various tendencies, opinions, and characters, widely differing one from another.] You are not to think that our greatest strength lies in our greatest number—libertines, and mere men of honour. No: we have among us philosophers of a very different character—men of curious contemplation, not governed by such gross things as sense and custom, but of an abstracted virtue and sublime morals: and the less religious the more virtuous. For virtue of the high and disinterested kind no man is so well qualified as an infidel; it being a mean and selfish thing to be virtuous through fear or hope. The notion of a Providence, and future state of rewards and punishments, may indeed tempt or scare men of abject spirit into practices contrary to the natural bent of their souls, but will never produce a true and genuine virtue. To go to the bottom of things, to analyse virtue into its first principles, and fix a scheme of duty on its true basis, you must understand that there is an Idea of Beauty natural to the mind of man. This all men desire, this they are pleased and delighted with *for its own sake*, purely from an instinct of nature. A man needs no arguments to make him discern and approve what is beautiful; it strikes at first sight, and attracts without a reason. And as this beauty is found in the shape and form of corporeal things; so also is there analogous to it a beauty of another kind—an order, a symmetry, and comeliness, in the moral world. And as the eye perceiveth the one, so the mind doth, by a certain interior sense[2], perceive the other; which sense, talent, or faculty is ever quickest and purest in the noblest minds. Thus, as by sight I discern the beauty of a plant or an animal, even so the mind appre-

[1] The sentences within brackets were introduced in the third edition.

[2] Afterwards called a *moral sense*. See p. 129.

hends the moral excellence, the beauty, and decorum of justice and temperance. And as we readily pronounce a dress becoming, or an attitude graceful, we can, with the same free untutored judgment, at once declare whether this or that conduct or action be comely and beautiful. To relish this kind of beauty there must be a delicate and fine taste; but, where there is this natural taste, nothing further is wanting, either as a principle to convince, or as a motive to induce men to the love of virtue. And more or less there is of this taste or sense in every creature that hath reason. All rational beings are by nature social. They are drawn one towards another by natural affections. They unite and incorporate into families, clubs, parties, and commonwealths by mutual sympathy. As, by means of the sensitive soul, our several distinct parts and members do consent towards the animal functions, and are connected in one whole; even so, the several parts of these rational systems or bodies politic, by virtue of this moral or interior sense, are held together, have a fellow feeling, do succour and protect each other, and jointly co-operate towards the same end. Hence that joy in society, that propension towards doing good to our kind, that gratulation and delight in beholding the virtuous deeds of other men, or in reflecting on our own. By contemplation of the fitness and order of the parts of a moral system, regularly operating, and knit together by benevolent affections, the mind of man attaineth to the highest notion of beauty, excellence, and perfection. Seized and rapt with this sublime idea, our philosophers do infinitely despise and pity whoever shall propose or accept any other motive to virtue. Interest is a mean ungenerous thing, destroying the merit of virtue; and falsehood of every kind is inconsistent with the genuine spirit of philosophy.

Cri. The love therefore that you bear to moral beauty, and your passion for abstracted truth, will not suffer you to think with patience of those fraudulent impositions upon mankind—Providence, the Immortality of the Soul, and a future Retribution of rewards and punishments; which, under the notion of promoting, do, it seems, destroy all true virtue, and at the same time contradict and disparage your noble theories, manifestly tending to the perturbation

and disquiet of men's minds, and filling them with fruitless hopes and vain terrors[1].

Alc. Men's first thoughts and natural notions are the best in moral matters. And there is no need that mankind should be preached, or reasoned, or frightened into virtue, a thing so natural and congenial to every human soul. Now, if this be the case, as it certainly is, it follows that all the ends of society are secured without Religion, and that an infidel bids fair to be the most virtuous man, in a true, sublime, and heroic sense.

4. *Euph.* O Alciphron, while you talk, I feel an affection in my soul like the trembling of one lute upon striking the unison strings of another. Doubtless there is a beauty of the mind, a charm in virtue, a symmetry and proportion in the moral world. This moral beauty was known to the ancients by the name of *honestum*, or τὸ καλόν[2]. And, in order to know its force and influence, it may not be amiss to inquire, what it was understood to be, and what light it was placed in, by those who first considered it, and gave it a name. Τὸ καλόν, according to Aristotle, is the ἐπαινετόν or *laudable;* according to Plato, it is the ἡδύ or ὠφέλιμον, *pleasant* or *profitable*, which is meant with respect to a reasonable mind and its true interest. Now, I would feign know whether a mind which considers an action as laudable be not carried beyond the bare action itself, to regard the opinion of others concerning it?

Alc. It is.

Euph. And whether this be a sufficient ground or principle of virtue, for a man to act upon, when he thinks himself removed from the eye and observation of every other intelligent being?

Alc. It seems not.

Euph. Again: I ask whether a man who doth a thing pleasant or profitable, as such, might not be supposed to forbear doing it, or even to do the contrary, upon the prospect of greater pleasure or profit?

Alc. He might.

[1] Not all of the free-thinking party disowned immortality, and professed to follow virtue only on account of its abstract beauty.

[2] 'The beautiful' (τὸ καλόν), regarded ethically, is characteristic of Greek morality, with its fine artistic feeling.

Euph. Doth it not follow from hence that the beauty of virtue, or τὸ καλόν, in either Aristotle's or Plato's sense, is not a sufficient principle or ground to engage sensual and worldly-minded men in the practice of it ?

Alc. What then ?

Euph. Why then it will follow that hope of reward and fear of punishment are highly expedient to cast the balance of pleasant and profitable on the side of virtue, and thereby very much conduce to the benefit of human society.

Alciphron upon this appealed :—Gentlemen, said he, you are witnesses of this unfair proceeding of Euphranor, who argues against us from explications given by Plato and Aristotle of the beauty of virtue, which are things we have nothing to say to ; the philosophers of our sect abstracting from all praise, pleasure, and interest, when they are enamoured and transported with that sublime idea.

I beg pardon, replied *Euphranor*, for supposing the minute philosophers of our days think like those ancient sages. But you must tell me, Alciphron, since you do not think fit to adopt the sense of Plato or Aristotle, what sense it is in which you understand the *beauty* of virtue. Define it, explain it, make me to understand your meaning, that so we may argue about the same thing, without which we can never come to a conclusion.

5. *Alc.* Some things are better understood by definitions and descriptions ; but I have always observed that those who would define, explain, and dispute about this point make the least of it. Moral beauty is of so peculiar and abstracted a nature, something so subtle, fine, and fugacious, that it will not bear being handled and inspected, like every gross and common subject. You will, therefore, pardon me if I stand upon my philosophic liberty ; and choose rather to intrench myself within the general and indefinite sense, rather than, by entering into a precise and particular explication of this beauty, perchance lose sight of it ; or give you some hold whereon to cavil, and infer, and raise doubts, queries, and difficulties about a point as clear as the sun, when nobody reasons upon it.

Euph. How say you, Alciphron, is that notion clearest when it is not considered ?

Alc. I say it is rather to be felt than understood—a

certain *je ne sais quoi*. An object, not of the discursive faculty, but of a peculiar sense, which is properly called the *moral sense*[1], being adapted to the perception of moral beauty, as the eye to colours, or the ear to sounds.

Euph. That men have certain instinctive sensations or passions from nature, which make them amiable and useful to each other, I am clearly convinced. Such are a fellow-feeling with the distressed, a tenderness for our offspring, an affection towards our friends, our neighbours, and our country, an indignation against things base, cruel, or unjust. These passions are implanted in the human soul, with several other fears and appetites, aversions and desires, some of which are strongest and uppermost in one mind, others in another. Should it not therefore seem a very uncertain guide in morals, for a man to follow his passion or inward feeling; and would not this rule infallibly lead different men different ways, according to the prevalency of this or that appetite or passion?

Alc. I do not deny it.

Euph. And will it not follow from hence that duty and virtue are in a fairer way of being practised, if men are led by reason and judgment, balancing low and sensual pleasures with those of a higher kind, comparing present losses with future gains, and the uneasiness and disgust of every vice with the delightful practice of the opposite virtue, and the pleasing reflexions and hopes which attend it? Or can there be a stronger motive to virtue than the shewing that, considered in all lights, it is every man's true interest?

6. *Alc.* I tell you, Euphranor, we contemn the virtue of that man who computes and deliberates, and must have a reason for being virtuous. The refined moralists of our sect are ravished and transported with the abstract beauty of virtue. They disdain all forensic motives to

[1] The term 'moral sense' (*sensus decori et honesti* of ancient moralists) came into use about the time Berkeley wrote, as a substitute for conscience, to indicate perception of moral qualities in a way analogous to our apprehension of the qualities of matter in the external senses. It is so employed by Shaftesbury, in his *Inquiry concerning Virtue* (1699); and afterwards by Hutcheson, in his *Inquiry into the Origin of Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), and his *Illustrations upon the Moral Sense* (1728).

it; and love virtue only for virtue's sake. Oh rapture! oh enthusiasm! oh the quintessence of beauty! methinks I could dwell for ever on this contemplation: but, rather than entertain myself, I must endeavour to convince you. Make an experiment on the first man you meet. Propose a villainous or unjust action. Take his first sense of the matter, and you shall find he detests it. He may, indeed, be afterwards misled by arguments, or overpowered by temptation; but his original, unpremeditated, and genuine thoughts are just and orthodox. How can we account for this but by a moral sense, which, left to itself, hath as quick and true a perception of the beauty and deformity of human actions as the eye hath of colours?

Euph. May not this be sufficiently accounted for by conscience, affection, passion, education, reason, custom, religion; which principles and habits, for aught I know, may be what you metaphorically call a moral sense?

Alc. What I call a moral sense is strictly, properly, and truly such, and in kind different from all those things you enumerate. It is what all men have, though all may not observe it.

Upon this *Euphranor* smiled and said—Alciphron has made discoveries where I least expected it. For, said he, in regard to every other point I should hope to learn from him; but for the knowledge of myself, or the faculties and powers of my own mind, I should have looked at home. And there I might have looked long enough without finding this new talent, which even now, after being tutored, I cannot comprehend. For Alciphron, I must needs say, is too sublime and enigmatical upon a point which of all others ought to be most clearly understood. I have often heard that your deepest adepts and oldest professors in science are the obscurest. Lysicles is young, and speaks plain. Would he but favour us with his sense of this point, it might perhaps prove more upon a level with my apprehension.

7. *Lysicles* shook his head, and in a grave and earnest manner addressed the company.—Gentlemen, said he, Alciphron stands upon his own legs. I have no part in these refined notions he is at present engaged to defend. If I must subdue my passions, abstract, contemplate, be

enamoured of virtue; in a word, if I must be an enthusiast, I owe so much deference to the laws of my country as to choose being an enthusiast in their way. Besides, it is better being so for some end than for none. This doctrine hath all the solid inconveniences, without the amusing hopes and prospects, of the Christian.

Alc. I never counted on Lysicles for my second in this point; which after all doth not need his assistance or explication. All subjects ought not to be treated in the same manner. The way of definition and division is dry and pedantic. Besides, the subject is sometimes too obscure, sometimes too simple for this method. One while we know too little of a point, another too much, to make it plainer by discourse.

Cri. To hear Alciphron talk puts me in mind of that ingenious Greek who, having wrapped a man's brother up in a cloak, asked him whether he knew that person; being ready, either by keeping on or pulling off the cloak, to confute his answer whatever it should be. For my part, I believe, if matters were fairly stated, that rational satisfaction, that peace of mind, that inward comfort, and conscientious joy, which a good Christian finds in good actions, would not be found to fall short of all the ecstasy, rapture, and enthusiasm supposed to be the effect of that high and undescribed principle. In earnest, can any ecstasy be higher, any rapture more affecting, than that which springs from the love of God and man, from a conscience void of offence, and an inward discharge of duty, with the secret delight, trust, and hope that attend it?

Alc. O Euphranor, we votaries of truth do not envy but pity the groundless joys and mistaken hopes of a Christian. And, as for conscience and rational pleasure, how can we allow a conscience without allowing a vindictive Providence? Or how can we suppose the charm of virtue consists in any pleasure or benefit attending virtuous actions [1], without giving great advantages to the Christian religion; which, it seems, excites its believers to virtue

[1] ['There can never be less self-enjoyment than in these supposed wise characters, these selfish computers of happiness and private good.' *Characteristics*, vol. III. p. 301.]—Note in third edition, by the Author.

by the highest interests and pleasures in reversion. Alas! should we grant this, there would be a door opened to all those rusty declaimers upon the necessity and usefulness of the great points of Faith—the immortality of the soul, a future state, rewards and punishments, and the like exploded conceits; which, according to our system and principles, may perhaps produce a low, popular, interested kind of virtue, but must absolutely destroy and extinguish it in the sublime and heroic sense.

8. *Euph.* What you now say is very intelligible: I wish I understood your main principle as well.

Alc. And are you then in earnest at a loss? Is it possible you should have no notion of beauty, or that having it you should not know it to be amiable—amiable I say, in itself, and for itself?

Euph. Pray tell me, Alciphron, are all mankind agreed in the notion of a beauteous face?

Alc. Beauty in human-kind seems to be of a mixed and various nature; forasmuch as the passions, sentiments, and qualities of the soul, being seen through and blending with the features, work differently on different minds, as the sympathy is more or less. But with regard to other things is there no steady principle of beauty? Is there upon earth a human mind without the idea of order, harmony, and proportion?

Euph. O Alciphron, it is my weakness that I am apt to be lost and bewildered in abstractions and generalities, but a particular thing is better suited to my faculties[1]. I find it easy to consider and keep in view the objects of sense: let us therefore try to discover what their beauty is, or wherein it consists; and so, by the help of these sensible things, as a scale or ladder[2], ascend to moral and intelligible beauty. Be pleased then to inform me, what is it we call beauty in the objects of sense?

Alc. Every one knows beauty is that which pleases.

Euph. There is then beauty in the smell of a rose, or the taste of an apple?

[1] Cf. *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Introduction, sect. 6–17, and other passages directed against metaphysical abstractions.

[2] So *Siris*, in its general conception. What follows, in this and the next section, relates to the sense of beauty in the world of the senses.

Alc. By no means. Beauty is, to speak properly, perceived only by the eye.

Euph. It cannot therefore be defined in general—that which pleaseth?

Alc. I grant it cannot.

Euph. How then shall we limit or define it?

Alciphron, after a short pause, said that beauty consisted in a certain symmetry or proportion pleasing to the eye.

Euph. Is this proportion one and the same in all things, or is it different in different kinds of things?

Alc. Different, doubtless. The proportions of an ox would not be beautiful in a horse. And we may observe also in things inanimate, that the beauty of a table, a chair, a door, consists in different proportions.

Euph. Doth not this proportion imply the relation of one thing to another?

Alc. It doth.

Euph. And are not these relations founded in size and shape?

Alc. They are.

Euph. And, to make the proportions just, must not those mutual relations of size and shape in the parts be such as shall make the whole complete and perfect in its kind?

Alc. I grant they must.

Euph. Is not a thing said to be perfect in its kind when it answers the end for which it was made?

Alc. It is.

Euph. The parts, therefore, in true proportions must be so related, and adjusted to one another, as that they may best conspire to the use and operation of the whole?

Alc. It seems so.

Euph. But the comparing parts one with another, the considering them as belonging to one whole, and referring this whole to its use or end, should seem the work of *reason:* should it not?

Alc. It should.

Euph. Proportions, therefore, are not, strictly speaking, perceived by the sense of sight, but only by reason through the means of sight.

Alc. This I grant.

Euph. Consequently beauty, in your sense of it, is an object, not of the eye, but of the mind.

Alc. It is.

Euph. The eye, therefore, alone cannot see that a chair is handsome, or a door well proportioned.

Alc. It seems to follow; but I am not clear as to this point.

Euph. Let us see if there be any difficulty in it. Could the chair you sit on, think you, be reckoned well proportioned or handsome, if it had not such a height, breadth, wideness, and was not so far reclined as to afford a convenient seat?

Alc. It could not.

Euph. The beauty, therefore, or symmetry of a chair cannot be apprehended but by knowing its use, and comparing its figure with that use; which cannot be done by the eye alone, but is the effect of judgment. It is, therefore, one thing to *see* an object, and another to *discern its beauty.*

Alc. I admit this to be true.

9. *Euph.* The architects judge a door to be of a beautiful proportion, when its height is double of the breadth. But if you should invert a well-proportioned door, making its breadth become the height, and its height the breadth, the figure would still be the same, but without that beauty in one situation which it had in another. What can be the cause of this, but that, in the fore-mentioned supposition, the door would not yield convenient entrances to creatures of a human figure? But, if in any other part of the universe there should be supposed rational animals of an inverted stature, they must be supposed to invert the rule for proportion of doors; and to them that would appear beautiful which to us was disagreeable.

Alc. Against this I have no objection.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, is there not something truly decent and beautiful in dress?

Alc. Doubtless, there is.

Euph. Are any likelier to give us an idea of this beauty in dress than painters and sculptors, whose proper business and study it is to aim at graceful representations?

Alc. I believe not.

Euph. Let us then examine the draperies of the great masters in these arts: how, for instance, they use to clothe a matron, or a man of rank. Cast an eye on those figures (said he, pointing to some prints after Raphael and Guido, that hung upon the wall)—what appearance do you think an English courtier or magistrate, with his Gothic, succinct, plaited garment, and his full-bottomed wig; or one of our ladies in her unnatural dress, pinched and stiffened and enlarged, with hoops and whale-bone and buckram, must make, among those figures so decently clad in draperies that fall into such a variety of natural, easy, and ample folds, that appear with so much dignity and simplicity, that cover the body without encumbering it, and adorn without altering the shape?

Alc. Truly I think they must make a very ridiculous appearance.

Euph. And what do you think this proceeds from? Whence is it that the Eastern nations, the Greeks, and the Romans, naturally ran into the most becoming dresses; while our Gothic gentry, after so many centuries racking their inventions, mending, and altering, and improving, and whirling about in a perpetual rotation of fashions, have never yet had the luck to stumble on any that was not absurd and ridiculous? Is it not from hence—that, instead of consulting use, reason, and convenience, they abandon themselves to irregular fancy, the unnatural parent of monsters? Whereas the ancients, considering the use and end of dress, made it subservient to the freedom, ease, and convenience of the body; and, having no notion of mending or changing the natural shape, they aimed only at shewing it with decency and advantage. And, if this be so, are we not to conclude that the beauty of dress depends on its subserviency to certain ends and uses?

Alc. This appears to be true.

Euph. This subordinate relative nature of beauty, perhaps, will be yet plainer, if we examine the respective beauties of a horse and a pillar. Virgil's description of the former is—

> Illi ardua cervix,
> Argutumque caput, brevis alvus, obesaque terga,
> Luxuriatque toris animosum pectus.

Now, I would fain know whether the perfections and uses of a horse may not be reduced to these three points, courage, strength, and speed; and whether each of the beauties enumerated doth not occasion or betoken one of these perfections? After the same manner, if we inquire into the parts and proportions of a beautiful pillar, we shall perhaps find them answer to the same idea. Those who have considered the theory of architecture tell us[1] the proportions of the three Grecian orders were taken from the human body, as the most beautiful and perfect production of nature. Hence were derived those graceful ideas of columns, which had a character of strength without clumsiness, or of delicacy without weakness. Those beautiful proportions were, I say, taken originally from nature, which, in her creatures, as hath been already observed, referreth them to some end, use, or design. The *gonfiezza* also, or swelling, and the diminution of a pillar, is it not in such proportion as to make it appear strong and light at the same time? In the same manner, must not the whole entablature, with its projections, be so proportioned, as to seem great but not heavy, light but not little; inasmuch as a deviation into either extreme would thwart that reason and use of things wherein their beauty is founded, and to which it is subordinate? The entablature, and all its parts and ornaments, architrave, frieze, cornice, triglyphs, metopes, modiglions, and the rest, have each a use or appearance of use, in giving firmness and union to the building, in protecting it from the weather and casting off the rain, in representing the ends of beams with their intervals, the production of rafters, and so forth. And if we consider the graceful angles in frontispieces, the spaces between the columns, or the ornaments of their capitals—shall we not find, that their beauty riseth from the appearance of use, or the imitation of natural things, whose beauty is originally founded on the same principle? which is, indeed, the grand distinction between Grecian and Gothic architecture; the latter being fantastical, and for the most part founded

[1] [See the learned Patriarch of Aquileia's *Commentary on Vitruvius*, Lib. IV. cap. 1.]—AUTHOR. Berkeley's taste in architecture, fostered in Italy, has been already referred to. Cf. Dial. II. sect. 15, note.

neither in nature nor in reason, in necessity nor use, the appearance of which accounts for all the beauty, grace, and ornament of the other.

Cri. What Euphranor has said confirms the opinion I always entertained—that the rules of architecture were founded, as all other arts which flourished among the Greeks, in truth, and nature, and good sense. But the ancients, who, from a thorough consideration of the grounds and principles of art, formed their idea of beauty, did not always confine themselves strictly to the same rules and proportions; but, whenever the particular distance, position, elevation, or dimension of the fabric or its parts seemed to require it, made no scruple to depart from them, without deserting the original principles of beauty, which governed whatever deviations they made. This latitude or licence might not, perhaps, be safely trusted with most modern architects, who in their bold sallies seem to act without aim or design; and to be governed by no idea, no reason, or principle of art, but pure caprice, joined with a thorough contempt of that noble simplicity of the ancients, without which there can be no unity, gracefulness, or grandeur in their works; which of consequence must serve only to disfigure and dishonour the nation, being so many monuments to future ages of the opulence and ill taste of the present; which, it is to be feared, would succeed as wretchedly, and make as mad work in other affairs, were men to follow, instead of rules, precepts, and morals, their own taste and first thoughts of beauty.

Alc. I should now, methinks, be glad to see a little more distinctly the use and tendency of this digression upon architecture.

Euph. Was not beauty the very thing we inquired after?

Alc. It was.

Euph. What think you, Alciphron, can the appearance of a thing please at this time, and in this place, which pleased two thousand years ago, and two thousand miles off, without some real principle of beauty?

Alc. It cannot.

Euph. And is not this the case with respect to a just piece of architecture?

Alc. Nobody denies it.

Euph. Architecture, the noble offspring of judgment

and fancy, was gradually formed in the most polite and knowing countries of Asia, Egypt, Greece, and Italy. It was cherished and esteemed by the most flourishing states and most renowned princes, who with vast expense improved and brought it to perfection. It seems, above all other arts, peculiarly conversant about order, proportion, and symmetry. May it not therefore be supposed, on all accounts, most likely to help us to some rational notion of the *je ne sais quoi* in beauty? And, in effect, have we not learned from this digression that, as there is no beauty without proportion, so proportions are to be esteemed just and true, only as they are relative to some certain use or end, their aptitude and subordination to which end is, at bottom, that which makes them please and charm?

Alc. I admit all this to be true.

10. *Euph.* According to this doctrine, I would fain know what beauty[1] can be found in a moral system, formed, connected, and governed by chance, fate, or any other blind unthinking principle? Forasmuch as without thought there can be no end or design; and without an end there can be no use; and without use there is no aptitude or fitness of proportion, from whence beauty springs.

Alc. May we not suppose a certain vital principle of beauty, order, and harmony, diffused throughout the world, without supposing a Providence inspecting, punishing, and rewarding the moral actions of men; without supposing the immortality of the soul, or a life to come; in a word, without admitting any part of what is commonly called Faith, Worship, and Religion?

Cri. Either you suppose this principle intelligent, or not intelligent: if the latter, it is all one with chance or fate, which was just now argued against: if the former, let me entreat Alciphron to explain to me wherein consists the beauty of a moral system, with a supreme Intelligence at the head of it which neither protects the innocent, punishes the wicked, nor rewards the virtuous. To suppose indeed a society of rational agents, acting under the eye of Providence, concurring in one design to promote the

[1] Shaftesbury's analogy between the sense of beauty and the moral sense was reproduced by Hutcheson in his *Inquiry*.

common benefit of the whole, and conforming their actions to the established laws and order of the Divine parental wisdom: wherein each particular agent shall not consider himself apart, but as the member of a great City, whose author and founder is God: in which the civil laws are no other than the rules of virtue and the duties of religion: and where every one's true interest is combined with his duty: — to suppose this would be delightful: on this supposition a man need be no Stoic or knight-errant, to account for his virtue. In such a system, vice is madness, cunning is folly, wisdom and virtue are the same thing; where, notwithstanding all the crooked paths and by-roads, the wayward appetites and inclinations of men, sovereign reason is sure to reform whatever seems amiss, to reduce that which is devious, make straight that which is crooked, and, in the last act, wind up the whole plot according to the exactest rules of wisdom and justice. In such a system or society, governed by the wisest precepts, enforced by the highest rewards and discouragements, it is delightful to consider how the regulation of laws, the distribution of good and evil, the aim of moral agents, do all conspire in due subordination to promote the noblest end, to wit, the complete happiness or well-being of the whole. In contemplating the beauty of such a moral system, we may cry out with the Psalmist—'Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou City of God.'

11. In a system of spirits, subordinate to the will, and under the direction of the Father of spirits, governing them by laws, and conducting them by methods suitable to wise and good ends[1], there will be great beauty. But in an incoherent fortuitous system, governed by chance, or in a blind system, governed by fate, or in any system where Providence doth not preside, how can beauty be, which cannot be without order, which cannot be without design? When a man is conscious that his will is inwardly conformed to the Divine will, producing order and harmony in the universe, and conducting the whole by the justest

[1] This is Berkeley's implied conception of the economy of the Universe—a City of God—a society of persons, in intercommunion through data of sense, all ideally united in God. It is further unfolded in *Siris*.

methods to the best end: this gives a beautiful idea. But, on the other hand, a consciousness of virtue overlooked, neglected, distressed by men, and not regarded or rewarded by God, ill-used in this world, without hope or prospect of being better used in another—I would fain know where is the pleasure of this reflexion, where is the beauty of this scene? Or, how could any man in his senses think the spreading such notions the way to spread or propagate virtue in the world? Is it not, I beseech you, an ugly system in which you can suppose no law and prove no duty, wherein men thrive by wickedness and suffer by virtue? Would it not be a disagreeable sight to see an honest man peeled by sharpers, to see virtuous men injured and despised while vice triumphed? An enthusiast may entertain himself with visions and fine talk about such a system; but when it comes to be considered by men of cool heads and close reason, I believe they will find no beauty nor perfection in it; nor will it appear that such a moral system can possibly come from the same hand, or be of a piece with the natural, throughout which there shine so much order, harmony, and proportion.

Alc. Your discourse serves to confirm me in my opinion. You may remember, I declared that touching this beauty of morality in the high sense, a man's first thoughts are the best; and that, if we pretend to examine, inspect, and reason, we are in danger to lose sight of it[1]. That in fact there is such a thing cannot be doubted, when we consider that in these days some of our philosophers have a high sense of virtue, without the least notion of religion—a clear proof of the usefulness and efficacy of our principles!

12. *Cri.* Not to dispute the virtue of minute philosophers, we may venture to call its cause in question, and make a doubt whether it be an inexplicable enthusiastic notion of moral beauty, or rather, as to me it seems, what was already assigned by Euphranor—complexion, custom, and religious education? But, allowing what beauty you please to virtue in an irreligious system, it cannot be less in

[1] ['Men's first thoughts on moral matters are generally better than their second: their natural notions than those refined by study.' *Characteristics*, vol. I. p. 18.]—Note in third edition, by the Author.

a religious, unless you will suppose that her charms diminish as her dowry increaseth. The truth is, a believer hath all the motives from the beauty of virtue in any sense whatsoever that an unbeliever can possibly have, besides other motives which an unbeliever hath not. Hence, it is plain those of your sect who have moral virtue owe it not to their peculiar tenets, which serve only to lessen the motives to virtue. Those, therefore, who are good are less good, and those who are bad are more bad, than they would have been were they believers.

Euph. To me it seems those heroic infidel inamoratos of abstracted beauty are much to be pitied, and much to be admired.

Lysicles hearing this, said with some impatience:—Gentlemen, you shall have my whole thoughts upon this point plain and frank. All that is said about a moral sense, or moral beauty, in any signification, either of Alciphron, or Euphranor, or any other, I take to be at bottom mere bubble and pretence. The καλόν and the πρέπον, the *beautiful* and *decent*, are things outward, relative, and superficial, which have no effect in the dark, but are specious topics to discourse and expatiate upon, as some formal pretenders of our sect, though in other points very orthodox, are used to do. But should one of them get into power, you would find him no such fool as Euphranor imagines. He would soon shew he had found out that the love of one's country is a prejudice: that mankind are rogues and hypocrites, and that it were folly to sacrifice one's-self for the sake of such: that all regards centre in this life, and that, as this life is to every man his own life, it clearly follows that charity begins at home. Benevolence to mankind is perhaps pretended, but benevolence to himself is practised by the wise. The livelier sort of our philosophers do not scruple to own these maxims; and as for the graver, if they are true to their principles, one may guess what they must think at the bottom.

Cri. Whatever may be the effect of pure theory upon certain select spirits, of a peculiar make, or in some other parts of the world, I do verily think that in this country of ours, reason, religion, and law are all together little enough to subdue the outward to the inner man; and that it must argue a wrong head and weak judgment to suppose that

without them men will be enamoured of the golden mean. To which my countrymen perhaps are less inclined than others, there being in the make of an English mind[1] a certain gloom and eagerness, which carries to the sad extreme—religion to fanaticism; free-thinking to atheism; liberty to rebellion: nor should we venture to be governed by taste, even in matters of less consequence. The beautiful in dress, furniture, and building is, as Euphranor hath observed, something real and well grounded: and yet our English do not find it out of themselves. What wretched work do they and other northern people make when they follow their own taste of beauty in any of these particulars, instead of acquiring the true, which is to be got from ancient models and the principles of art, as in the case of virtue from great models and meditation, so far as natural means can go? But in no case is it to be hoped that τὸ καλόν will be the leading idea of the many, who have quick senses, strong passions, and gross intellects.

13. *Alc.* The fewer they are the more ought we to esteem and admire such philosophers, whose souls are touched and transported with this sublime idea.

Cri. But then one might expect from such philosophers so much good sense and philanthropy as to keep their tenets to themselves, and consider their weak brethren, who are more strongly affected by certain senses and notions of another kind than that of the beauty of pure disinterested virtue.

Cratylus[2], a man prejudiced against the Christian religion, of a crazy constitution, of a rank above most men's ambition, and a fortune equal to his rank, had little capacity for sensual vices, or temptation to dishonest ones. Cratylus, having talked himself, or imagined that he had talked himself, into a stoical enthusiasm about the beauty of virtue, did, under the pretence of making men heroically virtuous, endeavour to destroy the means of making them reasonably and humanly so: a clear instance that neither birth, nor books, nor conversation can introduce a knowledge of the world into a conceited mind, which will ever

[1] Cf. Dial. II. sect. 17.

[2] Shaftesbury.

be its own object, and contemplate mankind in its own mirror!

Alc. Cratylus was a lover of liberty, and of his country, and had a mind to make men incorrupt and virtuous upon the purest and most disinterested principles.

Cri. [[1]It is true the main scope of all his writings (as he himself tells us[2]) was to assert the reality of a beauty and charm in moral as well as in natural subjects; to demonstrate a taste which he thinks more effectual than principle; to recommend morals on the same foot with manners; and so to advance philosophy on the very foundation of what is called agreeable and polite. As for religious qualms—the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, and such matters—this great man sticks not to declare that the liberal, polished, and refined part of mankind must needs consider them only as children's tales and amusements of the vulgar[3]. For the sake therefore of the better sort, he hath, in great goodness and wisdom, thought of something else, to wit, a *taste* or *relish:* this, he assures us, is at least what will influence; since, according to him, whoever has any impression of gentility (as he calls it) or politeness, is so acquainted with the decorum and grace of things as to be readily transported with the contemplation thereof[4].] His conduct seems just as wise as if a monarch should give out that there was neither jail nor executioner in his kingdom to enforce the laws, but that it would be beautiful to observe them, and that in so doing men would taste the pure delight which results from order and decorum[5].

[1] What follows, within brackets, was introduced in the second edition.

[2] 'It has been the main scope and principal end of these volumes to assert the reality of a beauty and charm in moral as well as natural subjects; and to demonstrate the reasonableness of a proportionate taste, and determinate choice in life and manners.' *Characteristics*, vol. III. p. 303.

[3] See *Characteristics*, vol. III. pp. 177-8.

[4] [See *Characteristics*, vol. III. Miscel. 5, cap. 3; Miscel. 3, cap. 2.] —Author.

[5] Here and elsewhere Berkeley does less than justice to Shaftesbury's view of the relation of religion to morality; as if he represented regard for reward and punishment in a future life to be necessarily selfish, and so really immoral, for he recognises it as auxiliary. But this when heaven is anticipated as realised goodness, and hell as the opposite of this. Take the following statement:—'If by the hope of reward

Alc. After all, is it not true that certain ancient philosophers, of great note, held the same opinion with Cratylus, declaring that he did not come up to the character, or deserve the title of a good man, who practised virtue for the sake of anything but its own beauty?

Cri. I believe, indeed, that some of the ancients said such things as gave occasion for this opinion.

Aristotle[1] distinguisheth between two characters of a good man—the one he calleth *ἀγαθός*, or simply *good*; the other *καλὸς κἀγαθός*, from whence the compound term *καλοκἀγαθία*, which cannot, perhaps, be rendered by any one word in our language. But his sense is plainly this:—*ἀγαθός* he defineth to be, that man to whom the good things of nature are good: for, according to him, those things which are vulgarly esteemed the greatest goods, as riches, honours, power, and bodily perfections, are indeed good by nature, but they happen nevertheless to be hurtful and bad to some persons, upon the account of evil habits; inasmuch as neither a fool, nor an unjust man, nor an intemperate, can be at all the better for the use of them, any more than a sick man for using the nourishment proper for those who are in health. But *καλὸς κἀγαθός* is that man in whom are to be found all things worthy and decent and laudable, purely as such and for their own sake, and who practiseth virtue from no other motive than the sole love of her own innate beauty. That philosopher observes likewise that there is a certain political habit, such as the Spartans and others had, who thought virtue was to be valued and practised on account of the natural advantages that attend it. For which reason, he adds, they are indeed good men, but they have not the *καλοκἀγαθία*, or supreme consummate virtue. From hence it is plain that, according to Aristotle,

he understood the love and desire of virtuous enjoyment, or of the very practice and exercise of virtue in another life; an expectation or hope of this kind is so far from being derogatory from virtue that it is an evidence of our loving it the more sincerely, and for its own sake. . . . He who, as a sound theist, believes in a reigning Mind, sovereign in nature and ruling all things with the highest perfection of goodness, must necessarily believe virtue to be naturally good and advantageous. . . . Hence we may determine justly the relation which virtue has to piety; the first being not complete but in the latter' (*Characteristics, Inquiry concerning Virtue*, Bk. I).

[1] [*Ethic. ad Eudemum*, Lib. VII. cap. ult.]—AUTHOR.

a man may be a good man without believing virtue its own reward, or being only moved to virtue by the sense of moral beauty. It is also plain that he distinguisheth the political virtues of nations, which the public is everywhere concerned to maintain, from this sublime and speculative kind.

It might also be observed that his exalted idea did consist with supposing a Providence which inspects and rewards the virtues of the best men. For, saith he, in another place[1]—If the gods have any care of human affairs, as it appears they have[2], it should seem reasonable to suppose they are most delighted with the most excellent nature, and most approaching their own, which is the mind, and that they will reward those who chiefly love and cultivate what is most dear to them. The same philosopher observes[3], that the bulk of mankind are not naturally disposed to be awed by shame, but by fear; nor to abstain from vicious practices on account of their deformity, but only of the punishment which attends them. And again[4], he tells us that youth, being of itself averse from abstinence and sobriety, should be under the restraint of laws regulating their education and employment, and that the same discipline should be continued even after they became men. For which, saith he, we want laws, and, in one word, for the whole ordering of life; inasmuch as the generality of mankind obey rather force than reason, and are influenced rather by penalties than the beauty of virtue (*ζημίαις ἢ τῷ καλῷ*).

From all which, it is very plain what Aristotle would have thought of those who should go about to lessen or destroy the hopes and fears of mankind, in order to make them virtuous on this sole principle of the beauty of virtue.

[1] [*Ad Nicom.* Lib. X. cap. 8.]—AUTHOR.

[2] 'as it appears they have'—*ὥσπερ δοκεῖ*, in the original, indicates that a Divine Providence is possible, but without pronouncing upon its truth or falsehood. Aristotle, unlike Plato, generally avoids a decision about a future life (cf. *Nicom. Ethics*, I. 10, 11; III. 6), or at least views the problems of ethics as unaffected by this regard, virtue being superior to the course of events. Aristotle and Shaftesbury are here perhaps more akin than Crito allows.

[3] [*Ad Nicom.* Lib. X. cap. 10.]—AUTHOR.

[4] [*Ad Nicom.* Lib. X. cap. 9.]—AUTHOR.

14. *Alc.* But, whatever the Stagirite and his Peripatetics might think, is it not certain that the Stoics maintained this doctrine in its highest sense, asserting the beauty of virtue to be all-sufficient, that virtue was her own reward, that this alone could make a man happy, in spite of all those things which are vulgarly esteemed the greatest woes and miseries of human life? And all this they held at the same time that they believed the soul of man to be of a corporeal nature, and in death dissipated like a flame or vapour.

Cri. It must be owned the Stoics sometimes talk as if they believed the mortality of the soul[1]. Seneca, in a letter of his to Lucilius, speaks much like a minute philosopher in this particular. But, in several other places, he declares himself of a clear contrary opinion, affirming that the souls of men after death mount aloft into the heavens, look down upon earth, entertain themselves with the theory of celestial bodies, the course of nature, and the conversation of wise and excellent men, who, having lived in distant ages and countries upon earth, make one society in the other world.

It must also be acknowledged that Marcus Antoninus sometimes speaks of the soul as perishing, or dissolving into its elementary parts. But it is to be noted that he distinguisheth three principles in the composition of human nature—the σῶμα, ψυχή, νοῦς[2], *body, soul, mind;* or, as he otherwise expresseth himself—σαρκία, πνευμάτιον, and ἡγεμονικόν—*flesh, spirit,* and *governing principle*[3]. What he calls the ψυχή, or *soul,* containing the brutal part of our nature, is indeed represented as a compound dissoluble, and actually dissolved by death; but the νοῦς, or τὸ ἡγεμονικόν[4] —the *mind,* or *ruling principle*—he held to be of a pure celestial nature, θεοῦ ἀπόσπασμα, a *particle of God,* which he sends back entire to the stars and the Divinity. Besides,

[1] Seneca and Marcus Aurelius are the only authorities referred to by Crito, in support of his interpretation of the Stoical doctrine of the relation of morality to religion —inadequate evidence in the light of recent research. Cf. even *Siris,* sect. 153, 172, 185, 276, 302, 323, &c. See Zeller's *Philosophie der Griechsen,* vol. III. Most Stoics seem to have accepted a pantheistic necessity, alien to belief in the immortality of the individual.

[2] [Marc. Antonin. Lib. III. cap. 16.]—Author.

[3] Compare this with St. Paul, 1 Thess. v. 23, who adopts a similar division.

[4] Cf. *Siris,* sect. 160, 172, 326.

among all his magnificent lessons and splendid sentiments upon the force and beauty of virtue, he is positive as to the being of God; and that not merely as a plastic nature, or soul of the world, but in the strict sense of a Providence inspecting and taking care of human affairs [1].

The Stoics, therefore, though their style was high, and often above truth and nature, yet it cannot be said that they so resolved every motive to a virtuous life into the sole beauty of virtue as to endeavour to destroy the belief of the immortality of the soul and a distributive Providence. After all, allowing the disinterested Stoics (therein not unlike our modern Quietists) to have made virtue its own sole reward, in the most rigid and absolute sense, yet what is this to those who are no Stoics? If we adopt the whole principles of that sect, admitting their notions of good and evil, their celebrated apathy, and, in one word, setting up for complete Stoics, we may possibly maintain this doctrine with a better grace; at least it will be of a piece, and consistent with the whole. But he who shall borrow this splendid patch from the Stoics, and hope to make a figure by inserting it into a piece of modern composition, seasoned with the wit and notions of these times, will indeed make a figure, but perhaps it may not be in the eyes of a wise man the figure he intended [2].

[1] [Marc. Antonin. Lib. II. cap. 11.]—AUTHOR.

[2] Shaftesbury warns against selfishness in our anticipation of reward and punishment after death:—'In this religious sort of discipline, the principle of *self-love*, which is naturally so prevailing in us, being no way moderated or restrained, but rather improved and made stronger every day, by the exercise of the passions in a subject of *more extended self-interest*; there may be reason to apprehend lest the temper of this kind should extend itself in general through all the parts of life. For, if the habit be such as to occasion in every particular a stricter attention to self-good and private interest, it must insensibly diminish the affections towards public good, or the interest of society, and introduce a certain narrowness of spirit, which, as some pretend, is peculiarly observable in the devout persons and zealots of almost every religious persuasion. This too must be confessed, that, if it be true piety to love God *for His own sake*, the over-solicitous regard to private good expected from Him, must of necessity prove a diminution of piety.' (*Characteristics*, vol. II. pp. 58, 59.) 'To be bribed only or terrified into an honest practice bespeaks little of real honesty or worth. If virtue be not really estimable in itself, I can see nothing estimable in following it for the sake of a bargain.' (Vol. I. p. 97.) Cf. *Characteristics*, vol. II

15. Though it must be owned the present age is very indulgent to everything that aims at profane raillery; which is alone sufficient to recommend any fantastical composition to the public. You may behold the tinsel of a modern author pass upon this knowing and learned age for good writing; affected strains for wit; pedantry for politeness; obscurity for depths; ramblings for flights; the most awkward imitation for original humour; and all this upon the sole merit of a little artful profaneness.

Alc. Every one is not alike pleased with writings of humour, nor alike capable of them. It is the fine irony of a man of quality[1], 'that certain reverend authors, who can condescend to lay-wit, are nicely qualified to hit the air of breeding and gentility, and that they will in time, no doubt, refine their manner to the edification of the polite world; who have been so seduced by the way of raillery and wit.' The truth is, the various taste of readers requireth various kinds of writers. Our sect hath provided for this with great judgment. To proselyte the graver sort, we have certain profound men at reason and argument. For the coffee-houses and populace, we have declaimers of a copious vein. Of such a writer it is no reproach to say, *fluit lutulentus*; he is the fitter for his readers. Then, for men of rank and politeness, we have the finest and wittiest *railleurs* in the world, whose ridicule is the surest test of truth[2].

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, are those ingenious *railleurs* men of knowledge?

Alc. Very knowing.

Euph. Do they know, for instance, the Copernican system, or the circulation of the blood?

Alc. One would think you judged of our sect by your

pp. 54-57, 68, 69, 270-273, &c.—Those passages justly condemn the servile so-called religion which is neither moral nor religious. But if, with the most enlightened philosophers and theologians, we mean by the hope of heaven hope of perpetual goodness for its own sake; and by 'salvation,' life in conformity to the Divine ideal; then religious hope of heaven, so far from being derogatory to morality, is an evidence of love of goodness for its own sake. The *Characteristics* attack perversion of this truth.

[1] Compare with this Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, vol. III. p. 291.

[2] See Shaftesbury's *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour.* Also Leland's *View*, Letter V, and Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses*—Dedication.

country neighbours: there is nobody in town but knows all those points.

Euph. You believe then antipodes, mountains in the moon, and the motion of the earth?

Alc. We do.

Euph. Suppose, five or six centuries ago, a man had maintained these notions among the *beaux esprits* of an English court; how do you think they would have been received?

Alc. With great ridicule.

Euph. And now it would be ridiculous to ridicule them?

Alc. It would.

Euph. But truth was the same then and now?

Alc. It was.

Euph. It should seem, therefore, that ridicule is no such sovereign touchstone and test of truth as you gentlemen imagine.

Alc. One thing we know: our raillery and sarcasms gall the black tribe, and that is our comfort.

Cri. There is another thing it may be worth your while to know: that men in a laughing fit may applaud a ridicule which shall appear contemptible when they come to themselves. Witness the ridicule of Socrates by the comic poet, the humour and reception it met with no more proving that than the same will yours to be just, when calmly considered by men of sense.

Alc. After all, thus much is certain, our ingenious men make converts by deriding the principles of religion. And, take my word, it is the most successful and pleasing method of conviction. These authors laugh men out of their religion, as Horace did out of their vices: *Admissi circum præcordia ludunt.* But a bigot cannot relish or find out their wit.

16. *Cri.* Wit without wisdom, if there be such a thing, is hardly worth finding. And as for the wisdom of these men, it is of a kind so peculiar one may well suspect it. Cicero was a man of sense, and no bigot; nevertheless, he makes Scipio own himself much more vigilant and vigorous in the race of virtue, from supposing heaven the prize[1]. And he introduceth Cato declaring he would

[1] [*Somn. Scipionis.*]—AUTHOR.

never have undergone those virtuous toils for the service of the public, if he had thought his being was to end with this life[1].

Alc. I acknowledge Cato, Scipio, and Cicero were very well for their times; but you must pardon me if I do not think they arrived at the high, consummate virtue of our modern free-thinkers.

Euph. It should seem then that virtue flourisheth more than ever among us?

Alc. It should.

Euph. And this abundant virtue is owing to the method taken by your profound writers to recommend it.

Alc. This I grant.

Euph. But you have acknowledged that the enthusiastic lovers of virtue are not the many of your sect, but only a few select spirits.

To which Alciphron making no answer, *Crito* addressed himself to Euphranor:—To make, said he, a true estimate of the worth and growth of modern virtue, you are not to count the virtuous men, but rather to consider the quality of their virtue. Now, you must know the virtue of these refined theorists is something so pure and genuine that a very little goes far, and is in truth invaluable. To which that reasonable interested virtue of the old English or Spartan kind can bear no proportion.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, are there not diseases of the soul as well as of the body?

Alc. Without doubt.

Euph. And are not those diseases vicious habits?

Alc. They are.

Euph. And, as bodily distempers are cured by physic, those of the mind are cured by philosophy: are they not?

Alc. I acknowledge it.

Euph. It seems, therefore, that philosophy is a medicine for the soul of man.

Alc. It is.

Euph. How shall we be able to judge of medicines, or know which to prefer? Is it not from the effects wrought by them?

Alc. Doubtless.

[1] [*De Senectute.*]—AUTHOR.

Euph. Where an epidemical distemper rages, suppose a new physician should condemn the known established practice, and recommend another method of cure, would you not, in proportion as the bills of mortality increased, be tempted to suspect this new method, notwithstanding all the plausible discourse of its abettors?

Alc. This serves only to amuse and lead us from the question.

Cri. It puts me in mind of my friend Lamprocles, who needed but one argument against infidels. I observed, said he, that as infidelity grew, there grew corruption of every kind, and new vices. This simple observation on matter of fact was sufficient to make him, notwithstanding the remonstrance of several ingenious men, imbue and season the minds of his children betimes with the principles of religion. The new theories, which our acute moderns have endeavoured to substitute in place of religion, have had their full course in the present age, and produced their effect on the minds and manners of men. That men are men, is a sure maxim: but it is as sure that Englishmen are not the same men they were; whether better or worse, more or less virtuous, I need not say. Every one may see and judge. Though, indeed, after Aristides had been banished, and Socrates put to death at Athens, a man, without being a conjuror, might guess what the Beauty of Virtue could do in England. But there is now neither room nor occasion for guessing. We have our own experience to open our eyes; which yet, if we continue to keep shut till the remains of religious education are quite worn off from the minds of men, it is to be feared we shall then open them wide, not to avoid, but to behold and lament our ruin.

Alc. Be the consequences what they will, I can never bring myself to be of a mind with those who measure truth by convenience. Truth is the only divinity that I adore. Wherever truth leads, I shall follow.

Euph. You have then a passion for truth?

Alc. Undoubtedly.

Euph. For all truths?

Alc. For all.

Euph. To know, or to publish them?

Alc. Both.

Euph. What! would you undeceive a child that was taking physic? Would you officiously set an enemy right that was making a wrong attack? Would you help an enraged man to his sword?

Alc. In such cases, common sense directs one how to behave.

Euph. Common sense, it seems then, must be consulted whether a truth be salutary or hurtful, fit to be declared or concealed.

Alc. How? you would have me conceal and stifle the truth, and keep it to myself. Is this what you aim at?

Euph. I only make a plain inference from what you grant. As for myself, I do not believe your opinions true. And, although you do, you should not therefore, if you would appear consistent with yourself, think it necessary or wise to publish hurtful truths. What service can it do mankind to lessen the motives to virtue, or what damage to increase them?

Alc. None in the world. But, I must needs say I cannot reconcile the received notions of a God and Providence to my understanding; and my nature abhors the baseness of conniving at a falsehood.

Euph. Shall we therefore appeal to truth, and examine the reasons by which you are withheld from believing these points?

Alc. With all my heart; but enough for the present. We will make this the subject of our next conference[1].

[1] Belief that goodness is beautiful is not enough to make men good: we are moved to do our duty by faith in omnipotent goodness. Is there reason in this faith, by which morality is vitalised? This is the outcome of the Third Dialogue, and the question which leads into what follows. Their thoughts and beliefs about God are what make men good. Whether religion is reasonable, and God in any way or degree knowable by man, is what the interlocutors now proceed to discuss.

THE FOURTH DIALOGUE[1].

1. Prejudices concerning a Deity. 2. Rules laid down by Alciphron to be observed in proving a God. 3. What sort of proof he expects. 4. Whence we collect the being of other thinking individuals. 5. The same method *a fortiori* proves the being of God. 6. Alciphron's second thoughts on this point. 7. God speaks to men. 8. How distance is perceived by sight. 9. The proper objects of sight at no distance. 10. Lights, shades, and colours, variously combined, form a language. 11. The signification of this language learned by experience. 12. God explaineth Himself to the eyes of men by the arbitrary use of sensible signs. 13. The prejudice and twofold aspect of a minute philosopher. 14. God present to mankind, informs, admonishes, and directs them in a sensible manner. 15. Admirable nature and use of this Visual Language. 16. Minute philosophers content to admit a God in certain senses. 17. Opinion of some who hold, that knowledge and wisdom are not properly in God. 18. Dangerous tendency of this notion. 19. Its original. 20. The sense of schoolmen upon it. 21. Scholastic use of the terms 'analogy' and 'analogical' explained: analogical perfections of God misunderstood. 22. God intelligent, wise, and good, in the proper sense of the words. 23. Objection from moral evil considered. 24. Men argue from their own defects against a Deity. 25. Religious worship reasonable and expedient.

1. EARLY the next morning, as I looked out of my window, I saw Alciphron walking in the garden with all the signs of a man in deep thought. Upon which I went down to him.

[1] In this Dialogue, the transition is made from Ethics to Religion, which is discussed as the alleged supreme motive force in conduct. We have here Berkeley's vindication of religion, on the foundation of his own metaphysical philosophy, which substitutes living Spirit as the only real Substance and Power, for the inscrutable 'substances' and 'causes' of Materialism, and interprets Natural Law as the outcome of the perpetual Providence of God.

In sect. 8–15, Euphranor and Crito rest faith in God on the fact of Visual Language, or Sense-sym-

Alciphron, said I, this early and profound meditation puts me in no small fright. How so? Because I should be sorry to be convinced there was no God. The thought of anarchy in nature[1], is to me more shocking than in civil life: inasmuch as natural concerns are more important than civil, and the basis of all others.

I grant, replied *Alciphron*, that some inconvenience may possibly follow from disproving a God: but as to what you say of fright and shocking, all that is nothing but mere prejudice. Men frame an idea or chimera in their own minds, and then fall down and worship it. Notions govern mankind: but of all notions that of God's governing the world hath taken the deepest root and spread the farthest. It is therefore in philosophy an heroical achievement to dispossess this imaginary monarch of his government, and banish all those fears and spectres which the light of reason alone can dispel:

> Non radii solis, non lucida tela diei
> Discutiunt, sed naturae species ratioque[2].

My part, said I, shall be to stand by, as I have hitherto done, and take notes of all that passeth during this memorable event; while a minute philosopher, not six feet high, attempts to dethrone the Monarch of the Universe.

bolism;—the universally accepted ground of belief in the existence of our fellow men. The *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, and particularly the *Vindication and Explanation* of that Theory, published the year after the appearance of *Alciphron*, should be compared with those sections.

Sections 16–24 discuss the knowableness of God, and in what sense of the words man is justified in saying that God *exists*, and is *powerful*, *intelligent*, and *good*. The Fourth Dialogue thus involves a criticism of Atheism and Agnosticism, in which Euphranor fulfils his promise, arguing that love of truth obliges him to accept the theistic interpretation of the universe. The conception of the visible world as a visual language, involved in the *Essay on Vision*, is adopted by Euphranor in this Dialogue, and expanded into a *divine* visual language, intelligible by man, and in which he is continually spoken to by God.

[1] If God is the principle of physical and moral order, vitalised and universalised, as at the centre of existence, Atheism is necessarily 'anarchic' and inconsistent with the order in external nature on which even physical science is based. In rejecting the theistic postulate of experience the atheist therefore subverts physical science as well as religion in a universal nescience.

[2] [Lucretius.]—AUTHOR.

Alas! replied *Alciphron*, arguments are not to be measured by feet and inches. One man may see more than a million; and a short argument, managed by a free-thinker, may be sufficient to overthrow the most gigantic chimera.

As we were engaged in this discourse, Crito and Euphranor joined us.

I find you have been beforehand with us to-day, said *Crito* to Alciphron, and taken the advantage of solitude and early hours, while Euphranor and I were asleep in our beds. We may, therefore, expect to see atheism placed in the best light, and supported by the strongest arguments.

2. *Alc.* The being of a God is a subject upon which there has been a world of commonplace, which it is needless to repeat. Give me leave therefore to lay down certain rules and limitations, in order to shorten our present conference. For, as the end of debating is to persuade, all those things which are foreign to this end should be left out of our debate.

First then, let me tell you I am not to be persuaded by metaphysical arguments; such, for instance, as are drawn from the idea of an all-perfect being, or the absurdity of an infinite progression of causes [1]. This sort of arguments I have always found dry and jejune; and, as they are not suited to my way of thinking, they may perhaps puzzle, but never will convince me. Secondly, I am not to be persuaded by the authority either of past or present ages, of mankind in general, or of particular wise men, all which passeth for little or nothing with a man of sound argument and free thought. Thirdly, all proofs drawn from utility or convenience are foreign to the purpose. They may prove indeed the usefulness of the notion, but not the existence of the thing. Whatever legislators or statesmen may think, truth and convenience are very different things to the rigorous eye of a philosopher.

And now, that I may not seem partial, I will limit myself also not to object, in the first place, from anything that may seem irregular or unaccountable in the works

[1] As in the *Meditations* of Descartes, or in Clarke's *Demonstration of the existence and attributes of God.*

of nature, against a cause of infinite power and wisdom ; because I already know the answer you will make, to wit, that no one can judge of the symmetry and use of the parts of an infinite machine, which are all relative to each other, and to the whole, without being able to comprehend the entire machine, or the whole universe. And, in the second place, I shall engage myself not to object against the justice and providence of a supreme Being from the evil that befals good men, and the prosperity which is often the portion of wicked men in this life ; because I know that, instead of admitting this to be an objection against a Deity, you would make it an argument for a future state, in which there shall be such a retribution of rewards and punishments as may vindicate the Divine attributes, and set all things right in the end. Now, these answers, though they should be admitted for good ones, are in truth no proofs of the being of God, but only solutions of certain difficulties which might be objected, supposing it already proved by proper arguments. Thus much I thought fit to premise, in order to save time and trouble both to you and myself.

Cri. I think that as the proper end of our conference ought to be supposed the discovery and defence of truth, so truth may be justified, not only by persuading its adversaries, but, where that cannot be done, by shewing them to be unreasonable. Arguments, therefore, which carry light have their effect, even against an opponent who shuts his eyes, because they shew him to be obstinate and prejudiced. Besides, this distinction between arguments that puzzle and that convince, is least of all observed by minute philosophers, and need not therefore be observed by others in their favour.—But, perhaps, Euphranor may be willing to encounter you on your own terms, in which case I have nothing further to say.

3. *Euph.* Alciphron acts like a skilful general, who is bent upon gaining the advantage of the ground, and alluring the enemy out of their trenches. We who believe a God are entrenched within tradition, custom, authority, and law. And, nevertheless, instead of attempting to force us, he proposes that he should voluntarily abandon these intrenchments, and make the attack ; when we may act on

the defensive with much security and ease, leaving him the trouble to dispossess us of what we need not resign. Those reasons (continued he, addressing himself to Alciphron) which you have mustered up in this morning's meditation, if they do not weaken, must establish our belief of a God; for the utmost is to be expected from so great a master in his profession, when he sets his strength to a point.

Alc. I hold the confused notion of a Deity, or some invisible power, to be of all prejudices the most unconquerable. When half-a-dozen ingenious men are got together over a glass of wine, by a cheerful fire, in a room well lighted, we banish with ease all the spectres of fancy and education, and are very clear in our decisions. But, as I was taking a solitary walk before it was broad daylight in yonder grove, methought the point was not quite so clear; nor could I readily recollect the force of those arguments which used to appear so conclusive at other times. I had I know not what awe upon my mind, and seemed haunted by a sort of panic, which I cannot otherwise account for than by supposing it the effect of prejudice: for, you must know that I, like the rest of the world, was once upon a time catechised and tutored into the belief of a God or Spirit. There is no surer mark of prejudice than the believing a thing without reason. What necessity then can there be that I should set myself the difficult task of proving a negative, when it is sufficient to observe that there is no proof of the affirmative, and that the admitting it without proof is unreasonable? Prove therefore your opinion; or, if you cannot, you may indeed remain in possession of it, but you will only be possessed of a prejudice.

Euph. O Alciphron, to content you we must prove, it seems, and we must prove upon your own terms. But, in the first place, let us see what sort of proof you expect.

Alc. Perhaps I may not expect it, but I will tell you what sort of proof I would have: and that is, in short—such proof as every man of sense requires of a matter of fact, or the existence of any other particular thing. For instance, should a man ask why I believe there is a king of Great Britain? I might answer—Because I had seen him. Or a king of Spain? Because I had seen those

who saw him. But as for this King of kings, I neither saw Him myself, or any one else that ever did see Him. Surely, if there be such a thing as God, it is very strange that He should leave Himself without a witness; that men should still dispute His being; and that there should be no one evident, sensible, plain proof of it, without recourse to philosophy or metaphysics. A matter of fact is not to be proved by notions, but by facts[1]. This is clear and full to the point. You see what I would be at. Upon these principles I defy superstition.

Euph. You believe then as far as you can see?

Alc. That is my rule of faith.

Euph. How! will you not believe the existence of things which you hear, unless you also see them?

Alc. I will not say so neither. When I insisted on *seeing*, I would be understood to mean perceiving in general. Outward objects make very different impressions upon the animal spirits, all which are comprised under the common name of *sense*. And whatever we can perceive by any sense we may be sure of.

4. *Euph.* What! do you believe then that there are such things as animal spirits?

Alc. Doubtless.

Euph. By what sense do you perceive them?

Alc. I do not perceive them immediately by any of my senses. I am nevertheless persuaded of their existence, because I can collect it from their effects and operations. They are the messengers which, running to and fro in the nerves, preserve a communication between the soul and outward objects.

Euph. You admit then the being of a soul?

[1] So Hume: 'The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible because it can never imply a contradiction. That the sun will *not* rise to-morrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction, than the affirmation that it *will* rise. If you ask a man why he believes any matter of fact which is absent he would give you a reason; and this reason would be *some other fact*' (Hume's *Inquiry concerning Understanding*, Part I, sect. 4). But although a present fact may reasonably prove an absent finite fact, can finite facts prove God? Can an infinite conclusion be drawn from finite premises? Is not God presupposed as the condition of all proof from facts, because this proof postulates the divine trustworthiness of natural order?

Alc. Provided I do not admit an immaterial substance, I see no inconvenience in admitting there may be such a thing as a soul. And this may be no more than a thin fine texture of subtile parts or spirits residing in the brain.

Euph. I do not ask about its nature. I only ask whether you admit that there is a principle of thought and action, and whether it be perceivable by sense.

Alc. I grant that there is such a principle, and that it is not the object of sense itself, but inferred from appearances which are perceived by sense.

Euph. If I understand you rightly, from animal functions and motions you infer the existence of animal spirits, and from reasonable acts you infer the existence of a reasonable soul. Is it not so?

Alc. It is.

Euph. It should seem, therefore, that the being of things imperceptible to sense may be collected from effects and signs, or sensible tokens.

Alc. It may.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, is not the soul that which makes the principal distinction between a real person and a shadow, a living man and a carcass?

Alc. I grant it is.

Euph. I cannot, therefore, know that *you*, for instance, are a distinct thinking individual, or a living real man, by surer or other signs than those from which it can be inferred that you have a soul[1]?

Alc. You cannot.

Euph. Pray tell me, are not all acts immediately and properly perceived by sense reducible to motion[2]?

Alc. They are.

Euph. From motions, therefore, you infer a mover or cause; and from reasonable motions (or such as appear calculated for a reasonable end) a rational cause, soul or spirit?

Alc. Even so.

[1] Accordingly, in strictness, *I* cannot see *you*: I can only see sensuous appearances, which signify that you, the invisible spiritual agent or person, are present. But the materialist mistakes the visible organised body for the self-conscious person signified by the body.

[2] The *De Motu* appears to grant that motion is the key to the phenomena of the material world, so far as mechanical science is concerned.

5. *Euph.* The soul of man actuates but a small body, an insignificant particle, in respect of the great masses of nature, the elements, and heavenly bodies, and system of the world. And the wisdom that appears in those motions which are the effect of human reason is incomparably less than that which discovers itself in the structure and use of organised natural bodies, animal or vegetable. A man with his hand can make no machine so admirable as the hand itself; nor can any of those motions by which we trace out human reason approach the skill and contrivance of those wonderful motions of the heart, and brain, and other vital parts, which do not depend on the will of man.

Alc. All this is true.

Euph. Doth it not follow, then, that from natural motions, independent of man's will, may be inferred both power and wisdom incomparably greater than that of the human soul?

Alc. It should seem so.

Euph. Further, is there not in natural productions and effects a visible unity of counsel and design? Are not the rules fixed and immoveable? Do not the same laws of motion obtain throughout? The same in China and here, the same two thousand years ago and at this day?

Alc. All this I do not deny.

Euph. Is there not also a connexion or relation between animals and vegetables, between both and the elements, between the elements and heavenly bodies; so that, from their mutual respects, influences, subordinations, and uses, they may be collected to be parts of one whole, conspiring to one and the same end, and fulfilling the same design?

Alc. Supposing all this to be true.

Euph. Will it not then follow that this vastly great, or infinite power and wisdom must be supposed in one and the same Agent, Spirit, or Mind; and that we have at least as clear, full, and immediate certainty of the being of this infinitely wise and powerful Spirit, as of any one human soul whatsoever besides our own?

Alc. Let me consider: I suspect we proceed too hastily. What! Do you pretend you can have the same assurance of the being of a God that you can have of mine, whom you actually see stand before you and talk to you?

Euph. The very same, if not greater [1].

Alc. How do you make this appear?

Euph. By the person Alciphron is meant an individual thinking thing, and not the hair, skin, or visible surface, or any part of the outward form, colour, or shape, of Alciphron.

Alc. This I grant.

Euph. And, in granting this, you grant that, in a strict sense, I do not see Alciphron, i.e. that individual thinking thing, but only such visible signs and tokens as suggest and infer [2] the being of that invisible thinking principle or soul. Even so, in the self-same manner, it seems to me that, though I cannot with eyes of flesh behold the invisible God, yet I do in the strictest sense behold and perceive by all my senses such signs and tokens, such effects and operations, as suggest, indicate, and demonstrate an invisible God—as certainly, and with the same evidence, at least, as any other signs, perceived by sense, do suggest to me the existence of your soul, spirit, or thinking principle; which I am convinced of only by a few signs or effects, and the motions of one small organised body: whereas I do at all times and in all places perceive sensible signs which evince the being of God. The point, therefore, doubted or denied by you at the beginning, now seems manifestly to follow from the premises. Throughout this whole inquiry, have we not considered every step with care, and made not the least advance without clear evidence? You and I examined and assented singly to each foregoing proposition: what shall we do then with the conclusion? For my part, if you do not help me out, I find myself under an absolute necessity of admitting it for true. You must therefore be content henceforward to bear the blame, if I live and die in the belief of a God [3].

6. *Alc.* It must be confessed, I do not readily find an answer. There seems to be some foundation for what you

[1] Cf. *Principles*, sect. 147.

[2] 'suggest and infer.' Cf. *Theory of Vision Vindicated*, sect. 42.

[3] Is belief in the existence of other men thus analogous to faith in the existence of God? Is not faith in the divine synthesis, and in the absolute trustworthiness of the Power universally at work, at the root of our trust in the significance of those visible appearances which 'suggest' the presence of another self-conscious person?

say. But, on the other hand, if the point was so clear as you pretend, I cannot conceive how so many sagacious men of our sect should be so much in the dark as not to know or believe one syllable of it.

Euph. O Alciphron, it is not our present business to account for the oversights, or vindicate the honour, of those great men the free-thinkers, when their very existence is in danger of being called in question.

Alc. How so?

Euph. Be pleased to recollect the concessions you have made, and then shew me, if the arguments for a Deity be not conclusive, by what better arguments you can prove the existence of that thinking thing which in strictness constitutes the free-thinker.

As soon as Euphranor had uttered these words, *Alciphron* stopped short, and stood in a posture of meditation, while the rest of us continued our walk and took two or three turns, after which he joined us again with a smiling countenance, like one who had made some discovery. I have found, said he, what may clear up the point in dispute, and give Euphranor entire satisfaction; I would say an argument which will prove the existence of a free-thinker, the like whereof cannot be applied to prove the existence of God. You must know then that your notion of our perceiving the existence of God, as certainly and immediately as we do that of a human person, I could by no means digest, though I must own it puzzled me, till I had considered the matter. At first methought a particular structure, shape, or motion was a most certain proof of a thinking reasonable soul. But a little attention satisfied me that these things have no necessary connexion with reason, knowledge, and wisdom; and that, allowing them to be certain proofs of a living soul, they cannot be so of a thinking and reasonable one. Upon second thoughts, therefore, and a minute examination of this point, I have found that nothing so much convinces me of the existence of another person as *his speaking to me*. It is my hearing you talk that, in strict and philosophical truth, is to me the best argument for your being. And this is a peculiar argument, inapplicable to your purpose; for, you will not, I suppose, pretend that God speaks to man in the same clear and sensible manner as one man doth to another?

7. *Euph.* How! is then the impression of sound so much more evident than that of other senses? Or, if it be, is the voice of man louder than that of thunder?

Alc. Alas! you mistake the point. What I mean is not the sound of speech merely as such, but the arbitrary use of sensible signs, which have no similitude or necessary[1] connexion with the things signified; so as by the apposite management of them to suggest and exhibit to my mind an endless variety of things, differing in nature, time, and place; thereby informing me, entertaining me, and directing me how to act, not only with regard to things near and present, but also with regard to things distant and future. No matter whether these signs are pronounced or written; whether they enter by the eye or ear: they have the same use, and are equally proofs of an intelligent, thinking, designing cause.

Euph. But what if it should appear that God really speaks to man; would this content you?

Alc. I am for admitting no inward speech, no holy instincts, or suggestions of light or spirit. All that, you must know, passeth with men of sense for nothing. If you do not make it plain to me that God speaks to men by outward sensible signs, of such sort and in such manner as I have defined, you do nothing[2].

Euph. But if it shall appear plainly that God speaks to men by the intervention and use of arbitrary, outward, sensible signs, having no resemblance or necessary connexion with the things they stand for and suggest: if it shall appear that, by innumerable combinations of these signs, an endless variety of things is discovered and made

[1] Cf. *New Theory of Vision*, sect. 17, 23, 28, 51, 58–66, 147; *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 30, 31, 65, 66, &c.; *Theory of Vision Vindicated*, sect. 30, 39, 40, 42–45, &c.; *Siris*, sect. 252–255, &c.—all of which enforce the *arbitrariness* (relatively to us) of the relations of co-existence and succession found to prevail among the phenomena of nature; also the consequent analogy between these relations, and those of signs to their meanings, in the spoken and written languages of mankind, is illustrated. The relations are 'arbitrary' in as far as an exhaustive interpretation of the changes in nature transcends human intelligence.

[2] Alciphron rejects moral and spiritual experience as evidence of God, and insists on the need for evidence in the data of the senses. But God is already so far presupposed, when the data of the senses are presumed to be interpretable.

known to us; and that we are thereby instructed or informed in their different natures; that we are taught and admonished what to shun, and what to pursue; and are directed how to regulate our motions, and how to act with respect to things distant from us, as well in time as place, will this content you?

Alc. It is the very thing I would have you make out; for therein consists the force, and use, and nature of language.

8. *Euph.* Look, Alciphron, do you not see the castle upon yonder hill?

Alc. I do.

Euph. Is it not at a great distance from you?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, is not distance a line turned end-wise to the eye[1]?

Alc. Doubtless.

Euph. And can a line, in that situation, project more than one single point on the bottom of the eye?

Alc. It cannot.

Euph. Therefore the appearance of a long and of a short distance is of the same magnitude, or rather of no magnitude at all—being in all cases one single point.

Alc. It seems so.

Euph. Should it not follow from hence that distance is not immediately perceived by the eye?

Alc. It should.

Euph. Must it not then be perceived by the mediation of some other thing?

Alc. It must.

Euph. To discover what this is, let us examine what alteration there may be in the appearance of the same object, placed at different distances from the eye. Now, I find by experience that when an object is removed still farther and farther off in a direct line from the eye, its visible appearance still grows lesser and fainter; and this change of appearance, being proportional and universal, seems

[1] Cf. *New Theory of Vision*, sect. 2-51, with this and with what follows, regarding Distance. This and the four following sections repeat that part of the *Essay on Vision* which deals with our interpretation of the visual signs of distance (sect. 2-5).

to me to be that by which we apprehend the various degrees of distance.

Alc. I have nothing to object to this.

Euph. But littleness or faintness, in their own nature, seem to have no necessary connexion with greater length of distance?

Alc. I admit this to be true.

Euph. Will it not follow then that they could never suggest it but from experience?

Alc. It will.

Euph. That is to say—we perceive distance, not immediately, but by mediation of a sign, which hath no likeness to it, or necessary connexion with it, but only suggests it from repeated experience, as words do things.

Alc. Hold, Euphranor: now I think of it, the writers in optics tell us of an angle made by the two optic axes, where they meet in the visible point or object; which angle, the obtuser it is the nearer it shews the object to be, and by how much the acuter, by so much the farther off; and this from a necessary demonstrable connexion.

Euph. The mind then finds out the distance of things by geometry?

Alc. It doth.

Euph. Should it not follow, therefore, that nobody could see but those who had learned geometry, and knew something of lines and angles?

Alc. There is a sort of natural geometry which is got without learning.

Euph. Pray inform me, Alciphron, in order to frame a proof of any kind, or deduce one point from another, is it not necessary that I perceive the connexion of the terms in the premises, and the connexion of the premises with the conclusion; and, in general, to know one thing by means of another, must I not first know that other thing? When I perceive your meaning by your words, must I not first perceive the words themselves? and must I not know the premises before I infer the conclusion?

Alc. All this is true.

Euph. Whoever, therefore, collects a nearer distance from a wider angle, or a farther distance from an acuter angle, must first perceive the angles themselves. And

he who doth not perceive those angles can infer nothing from them. Is it so or not?

Alc. It is as you say.

Euph. Ask now the first man you meet whether he perceives or knows anything of those optic angles? or whether he ever thinks about them, or makes any inferences from them, either by natural or artificial geometry? What answer do you think he would make?

Alc. To speak the truth, I believe his answer would be, that he knew nothing of these matters.

Euph. It cannot therefore be that men judge of distance by angles: nor, consequently, can there be any force in the argument you drew from thence, to prove that distance is perceived by means of something which hath a necessary connexion with it.

Alc. I agree with you.

9. *Euph.* To me it seems that a man may know whether he perceives a thing or no; and, if he perceives it, whether it be immediately or mediately: and, if mediately, whether by means of something like or unlike, necessarily or arbitrarily connected with it.

Alc. It seems so.

Euph. And is it not certain that distance is perceived only by experience [1], if it be neither perceived immediately by itself, nor by means of any image, nor of any lines and angles which are like it, or have a necessary connexion with it?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Doth it not seem to follow, from what hath been said and allowed by you, that before all experience a man would not imagine the things he saw were at any distance from him?

Alc. How! let me see.

Euph. The littleness or faintness of appearance, or any other idea or sensation not necessarily connected with or resembling distance, can no more suggest different degrees of distance, or any distance at all, to the mind

[1] 'experience,' i. e. of a connexion that is independent of the will of man, between what is immediately seen and the tactual or locomotive phenomena signified by what is immediately seen.

which hath not experienced a connexion of the things signifying and signified, than words can suggest notions before a man hath learned the language.

Alc. I allow this to be true.

Euph. Will it not thence follow that a man born blind, and made to see, would, upon first receiving his sight, take the things he saw not to be at any distance from him, but in his eye, or rather in his mind[1]?

Alc. I must own it seems so. And yet, on the other hand, I can hardly persuade myself that, if I were in such a state, I should think those objects which I now see at so great distance to be at no distance at all.

Euph. It seems, then, that you now think the objects of sight are at a distance from you?

Alc. Doubtless I do. Can any one question but yonder castle is at a great distance?

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, can you discern the doors, windows, and battlements of that same castle?

Alc. I cannot. At this distance it seems only a small round tower.

Euph. But I, who have been at it, know that it is no small round tower, but a large square building with battlements and turrets, which it seems you do not see.

Alc. What will you infer from thence?

Euph. I would infer that the very object which you strictly and properly perceive by sight is not that thing which is several miles distant.

Alc. Why so?

Euph. Because a little round object is one thing, and a great square object is another. Is it not?

Alc. I cannot deny it.

Euph. Tell me, is not the visible appearance alone the proper object of sight?

Alc. It is.

What think you now (said *Euphranor*, pointing towards the heavens) of the visible appearance of yonder planet? Is it not a round luminous flat, no bigger than a sixpence?

Alc. What then?

Euph. Tell me then, what you think of the planet itself.

[1] Cf. *New Theory of Vision*, sect. 41; *Vindication*, sect. 71.

Do you not conceive it to be a vast opaque globe, with several unequal risings and valleys?

Alc. I do.

Euph. How can you therefore conclude that the proper object of your sight[1] exists at a distance?

Alc. I confess I know not.

Euph. For your further conviction, do but consider that crimson cloud. Think you that, if you were in the very place where it is, you would perceive anything like what you now see?

Alc By no means. I should perceive only a dark mist.

Euph. Is it not plain, therefore, that neither the castle, the planet, nor the cloud, which you see here, are those real ones which you suppose exist at a distance?

10. *Alc.* What am I to think then? Do we see anything at all, or is it altogether fancy and illusion?

Euph. Upon the whole, it seems the proper objects of sight are light and colours[2], with their several shades and degrees; all which, being infinitely diversified and combined, do form a language wonderfully adapted to suggest and exhibit to us the distances, figures, situations, dimensions, and various qualities of tangible objects—not by similitude, nor yet by inference of necessary connexion, but by the arbitrary imposition of Providence, just as words suggest the things signified by them.

Alc. How! Do we not, strictly speaking, perceive by sight such things as trees, houses, men, rivers, and the like?

Euph. We do, indeed, perceive or apprehend those things by the faculty of sight. But, will it follow from thence that they are the proper and immediate objects of sight, any more than that all those things are the proper and immediate objects of hearing which are signified by the help of words or sounds?

Alc. You would have us think, then, that light, shades,

[1] 'the proper object of sight,' i. e. the phenomena which are due to the sense of sight *alone*, before we learn by experience to read into them phenomena of tactual and locomotive experience which they signify. This 'pure vision' cannot be revived in the experience of the adult. One may ask whether the adult could read relations of space into the sensuous data either of sight or touch, unless space relations were presupposed in them.

[2] Cf. *New Theory of Vision*, sect. 43.

and colours, variously combined, answer to the several articulations of sound in language; and that, by means thereof, all sorts of objects are suggested to the mind through the eye, in the same manner as they are suggested by words or sounds through the ear: that is, neither from necessary deduction to the judgment, nor from similitude to the fancy, but purely and solely from experience, custom, and habit.

Euph. I would not have you think anything more than the nature of things obligeth you to think, nor submit in the least to my judgment, but only to the force of truth: which is an imposition that I suppose the freest thinkers will not pretend to be exempt from.

Alc. You have led me, it seems, step by step, till I am got I know not where. But I shall try to get out again, if not by the way I came, yet by some other of my own finding.

Here *Alciphron*, having made a short pause, proceeded as follows—

11. Answer me, Euphranor, should it not follow from these principles that a man born blind, and made to see, would, at first sight, not only not perceive their distance, but also not so much as know the very things themselves which he saw, for instance, men or trees? which surely to suppose must be absurd.

Euph. I grant, in consequence of those principles, which both you and I have admitted, that such a one would never think of men, trees, or any other objects that he had been accustomed to perceive by touch, upon having his mind filled with new sensations of light and colours, whose various combinations he doth not yet understand, or know the meaning of; no more than a Chinese, upon first hearing the words *man* and *tree* would think of the things signified by them. In both cases, there must be time and experience, by repeated acts, to acquire a habit of knowing the connexion between the signs and things signified; that is to say, of understanding the language, whether of the eyes or of the ears[1]. And I conceive no absurdity in all this.

[1] The office of custom in the evolution of the elements of reason latent in the constitution of experience is here recognised. 'Custom,'

Alc. I see, therefore, in strict philosophical truth, that rock only in the same sense that I may be said to hear it, when the word *rock* is pronounced.

Euph. In the very same.

Alc. How comes it to pass then that every one shall say he sees, for instance, a rock or a house, when those things are before his eyes; but nobody will say he hears a rock or a house, but only the words or sounds themselves by which those things are said to be signified or suggested but not heard[1]? Besides, if vision be only a language speaking to the eyes, it may be asked, when did men learn this language? To acquire the knowledge of so many signs as go to the making up a language is a work of some difficulty. But, will any man say he hath spent time, or been at pains, to learn this Language of Vision?

Euph. No wonder; we cannot assign a time beyond our remotest memory. If we have been all practising this language, ever since our first entrance into the world: if the Author of Nature constantly speaks to the eyes of all mankind, even in their earliest infancy, whenever the eyes are open in the light, whether alone or in company: it doth not seem to me at all strange that men should not be aware they had ever learned a language begun so early, and practised so constantly, as this of Vision. And, if we also consider that it is the same throughout the whole world, and not, like other languages, differing in different places, it will not seem unaccountable that men should mistake the connexion between the proper objects of sight and the things signified by them to be founded in necessary relation or likeness; or, that they should even take them for the same things. Hence it seems easy to conceive why men who do not think should confound in this language of vision the signs with the things signified, otherwise than they are wont to do in the various particular languages formed by the several nations of men[2].

says Pascal, 'may be conceived as secondary nature, and nature as primary custom.' So too Wordsworth:

'And custom lie upon thee with a weight
. . . . deep almost as life.'

[1] Cf. *New Theory of Vision*, sect. 46, 47.

[2] Ibid., sect. 144.

12. It may be also worth while to observe that signs, being little considered in themselves, or for their own sake, but only in their relative capacity, and for the sake of those things whereof they are signs, it comes to pass that the mind overlooks them, so as to carry its attention immediately on to the things signified. Thus, for example, in reading we run over the characters with the slightest regard, and pass on to the meaning. Hence it is frequent for men to say, they see words, and notions, and things in reading of a book; whereas in strictness they see only the characters which suggest words, notions, and things. And, by parity of reason, may we not suppose that men, not resting in, but overlooking the immediate and proper objects of sight, as in their own nature of small moment, carry their attention onward to the very things signified, and talk as if they saw the secondary objects? which, in truth and strictness, are not seen, but only suggested and apprehended by means of the proper objects of sight, which alone are seen.

Alc. To speak my mind freely, this dissertation grows tedious, and runs into points too dry and minute for a gentleman's attention.

I thought, said *Crito*, we had been told that minute philosophers loved to consider things closely and minutely.

Alc. That is true, but in so polite an age who would be a mere philosopher? There is a certain scholastic accuracy which ill suits the freedom and ease of a well-bred man. But, to cut short this chicane, I propound it fairly to your own conscience, whether you really think that God Himself speaks every day and in every place to the eyes of all men.

Euph. That is really and in truth my opinion; and it should be yours too, if you are consistent with yourself, and abide by your own definition of language. Since you cannot deny that the great Mover and Author of nature constantly explaineth Himself to the eyes of men by the sensible intervention of arbitrary signs, which have no similitude or connexion with the things signified; so as, by compounding and disposing them, to suggest and exhibit an endless variety of objects, differing in nature, time, and place; thereby informing and directing men how to act with respect to things distant and future, as

well as near and present. In consequence, I say, of your own sentiments and concessions, you have as much reason to think the Universal Agent or God speaks to your eyes, as you can have for thinking any particular person speaks to your ears [1].

Alc. I cannot help thinking that some fallacy runs throughout this whole ratiocination, though perhaps I may not readily point it out. Hold! let me see. In language the signs are arbitrary, are they not?

Euph. They are.

Alc. And, consequently, they do not always suggest real matters of fact. Whereas this Natural Language, as you call it, or these visible signs, do always suggest things in the same uniform way, and have the same constant regular connexion with matters of fact: whence it should seem the connexion was necessary; and, therefore, according to the definition premised, it can be no language. How do you solve this objection?

Euph. You may solve it yourself by the help of a picture or looking-glass [2].

Alc. You are in the right. I see there is nothing in it. I know not what else to say to this opinion, more than that it is so odd and contrary to my way of thinking that I shall never assent to it.

13. *Euph.* Be pleased to recollect your own lectures upon prejudice, and apply them in the present case. Perhaps they may help you to follow where reason leads, and to suspect notions which are strongly rivetted, without having been ever examined.

Alc. I disdain the suspicion of prejudice. And I do not speak only for myself. I know a club of most ingenious men, the freest from prejudice of any men alive, who abhor the notion of a God, and I doubt not would be very able to untie this knot.

[1] He thus infers the continual omnipresence of the living God in external nature by analogy with the visible signs of the presence of a human being—both of them equally revelations of a spiritual agent behind the sensible signs. The visible world is thus taken as the natural incarnation of God, corresponding to the human organism in man.

[2] Cf. *New Theory of Vision*, sect. 45. So also Jonathan Edwards, *Remarks in Mental Philosophy*, art. 'Existence,' in Appendix to Dwight's Memoir.

Upon which words of Alciphron, I, who had acted the part of an indifferent stander-by, observed to him—That it misbecame his character and repeated professions, to own an attachment to the judgment, or build upon the presumed abilities of other men, how ingenious soever; and that this proceeding might encourage his adversaries to have recourse to authority, in which perhaps they would find their account more than he[1].

Oh! said *Crito*, I have often observed the conduct of minute philosophers. When one of them has got a ring of disciples round him, his method is to exclaim against prejudice, and recommend thinking and reasoning, giving to understand that himself is a man of deep researches and close argument, one who examines impartially, and concludes warily. The same man, in other company, if he chance to be pressed with reason, shall laugh at logic, and assume the lazy supine airs of a fine gentleman, a wit, a *railleur*, to avoid the dryness of a regular and exact inquiry. This double face of the minute philosopher is of no small use to propagate and maintain his notions. Though to me it seems a plain case that if a fine gentleman will shake off authority, and appeal from religion to reason, unto reason he must go: and, if he cannot go without leading-strings, surely he had better be led by the authority of the public than by that of any knot of minute philosophers.

Alc. Gentlemen, this discourse is very irksome, and needless. For my part, I am a friend to inquiry. I am willing reason should have its full and free scope. I build on no man's authority. For my part, I have no interest in denying a God. Any man may believe or not believe a God, as he pleases, for me. But, after all, Euphranor must allow me to stare a little at his conclusions.

Euph. The conclusions are yours as much as mine, for you were led to them by your own concessions.

14. You, it seems, stare to find that God is not far from every one of us; and that in Him we live, and move,

[1] But with Berkeley's recognition of natural change as virtually Divine language, more or less interpreted in human science, all reasonings founded on significance in nature are ultimately based on faith in the Power or Person universally at work in nature.

and have our being [1]. You, who, in the beginning of this morning's conference, thought it strange that God should leave Himself without a witness, do now think it strange the witness should be so full and clear.

Alc. I must own I do. I was aware, indeed, of a certain metaphysical hypothesis of our seeing all things in God by the union of the human soul with the intelligible substance of the Deity [2], which neither I, nor any one else could make sense of. But I never imagined it could be pretended that we saw God with our fleshly eyes as plain as we see any human person whatsoever, and that He daily speaks to our senses in a manifest and clear dialect [3].

Cri. [4 As for that metaphysical hypothesis, I can make no more of it than you. But I think it plain] this Optic Language hath a necessary connexion with knowledge, wisdom, and goodness [5]. It is equivalent to a constant creation, betokening an immediate act of power and providence. It cannot be accounted for by mechanical principles, by atoms, attractions, or effluvia. The instantaneous production and reproduction of so many signs, combined, dissolved, transposed, diversified, and adapted to such an endless variety of purposes, ever shifting with the occasions and suited to them, being utterly inexplicable and unaccountable by the laws of motion, by chance, by fate, or the like blind principles, doth set forth and testify the immediate operation of a spirit or thinking being; and not merely of a spirit, which every motion or gravitation may possibly infer, but of one wise, good, and provident Spirit, which directs and rules and governs the world. Some philosophers, being convinced of the wisdom and power of the Creator, from the make and contrivance of

[1] At this view of things God animates the whole material world, as a man animates or moves his own body: sensible things are the symbol and sacrament of Omnipresent Deity, and nature is essentially supernatural.

[2] Malebranche's hypothesis of the vision of the sensible world in God, which Berkeley here and elsewhere disclaims.

[3] Cf. sect. 5, and *Principles*, sect. 147.

[4] Introduced in second edition.

[5] He thus postulates 'necessary connexion' between physical order and moral government, but without articulating the connexion. Is not the perfect goodness of the Universal Power presupposed in all trust in experience, rather than logically proved by what we experience?

organised bodies and orderly system of the world, did nevertheless imagine that he left this system with all its parts and contents well adjusted and put in motion, as an artist leaves a clock, to go thenceforward of itself for a certain period[1]. But this Visual Language proves, not a Creator merely, but a provident Governor, actually and intimately present, and attentive to all our interests and motions, who watches over our conduct, and takes care of our minutest actions and designs throughout the whole course of our lives, informing, admonishing, and directing incessantly, in a most evident and sensible manner. This is truly wonderful[2].

Euph. And is it not so, that men should be encompassed by such a wonder, without reflecting on it?

15. Something there is of Divine and admirable in this Language, addressed to our eyes, that may well awaken the mind, and deserve its utmost attention:—it is learned with so little pains: it expresseth the differences of things so clearly and aptly: it instructs with such facility and despatch, by one glance of the eye conveying a greater variety of advices, and a more distinct knowledge of things, than could be got by a discourse of several hours. And, while it informs, it amuses and entertains the mind with such singular pleasure and delight. It is of such excellent use in giving a stability and permanency to human discourse, in recording sounds and bestowing life on dead languages, enabling us to converse with men of remote ages and countries. And it answers so apposite to the uses and necessities of mankind, informing us more distinctly of those objects whose nearness and magnitude qualify them to be of greatest detriment or benefit to our bodies, and less exactly in proportion as their littleness or distance makes them of less concern to us[3].

[1] See the *Collection of Papers* between Leibniz and Clarke, relating to the Principles of Natural Philosophy and Religion (1717), pp. 3, 5, in which this illustration occurs; also the *Système Nouveau de la Nature* of Leibniz.

[2] Under Berkeley's conception of the reality of the material world, the Cosmos would relapse into meaningless abstraction, apart from the continuous spiritual agency of God, determined according to Divine or perfect order, all regulated for the best.

[3] Euphranor makes much of the sense-symbolism in nature as evidence of the constant sensible

Alc. And yet these strange things affect men but little.

Euph. But they are not strange, they are familiar; and that makes them be overlooked. Things which rarely happen strike; whereas frequency lessens the admiration of things, though in themselves ever so admirable. Hence, a common man, who is not used to think and make reflexions, would probably be more convinced of the being of a God by one single sentence heard once in his life from the sky than by all the experience he has had of this Visual Language, contrived with such exquisite skill, so constantly addressed to his eyes, and so plainly declaring the nearness, wisdom, and providence of Him with whom we have to do.

Alc. After all, I cannot satisfy myself how men should be so little surprised or amazed about this visive faculty, if it was really of a nature so surprising and amazing.

Euph. But let us suppose a nation of men blind from their infancy, among whom a stranger arrives, the only man who can see in all the country; let us suppose this stranger travelling with some of the natives, and that one while he foretels to them that, in case they walk straight forward, in half a hour they shall meet men or cattle, or come to a house; that, if they turn to the right and proceed, they shall in a few minutes be in danger of falling down a precipice; that, shaping their course to the left, they will in such a time arrive at a river, a wood, or a mountain. What think you? Must they not be infinitely surprised that one who had never been in their country before should know it so much better than themselves? And would not those predictions seem to them as unaccountable and incredible as Prophecy to a minute philosopher?

Alc. I cannot deny it.

Euph. But it seems to require intense thought to be able to unravel a prejudice that has been so long forming; to get over the vulgar errors or ideas common to both senses; and so to distinguish between the objects of sight and touch [1], which have grown (if I may so say), blended

presence of God; not much of our finding God more fully in the moral and spiritual life which wells up in inner consciousness, and may be evoked from dormancy by miracles presented to the senses.

[1] [See the annexed Treatise, wherein this point and the whole Theory of Vision are more fully

together in our fancy, as to be able to suppose ourselves exactly in the state that one of those men would be in, if he were made to see. And yet this I believe is possible, and might seem worth the pains of a little thinking, especially to those men whose proper employment and profession it is to think, and unravel prejudices, and confute mistakes.

Alc. I frankly own I cannot find my way out of this maze, and should gladly be set right by those who see better than myself.

Cri. The pursuing this subject in their own thoughts would possibly open a new scene to those speculative gentlemen of the minute philosophy. It puts me in mind of a passage in the Psalmist, where he represents God to be covered with light as with a garment, and would methinks be no ill comment on that ancient notion of some eastern sages—that God had light for His body, and truth for His soul[1].

This conversation lasted till a servant came to tell us the tea was ready: upon which we walked in, and found Lysicles at the tea-table.

16. As soon as we sat down, I am glad, said *Alciphron*, that I have here found my second, a fresh man to maintain our common cause, which, I doubt, Lysicles will think hath suffered by his absence.

Lys. Why so?

Alc. I have been drawn into some concessions you will not like.

Lys. Let me know what they are.

Alc. Why, that there is such a thing as a God, and that His existence is very certain.

explained: the paradoxes of which Theory, though at first received with great ridicule by those who think ridicule the test of truth, were many years after surprisingly confirmed, by a case of a person made to see who had been blind from his birth. See *Philos. Transact.*, No. 402.]—AUTHOR. In the author's first edition this note ended at 'explained'; the remainder was added in his second edition. To both these editions the *Essay on Vision* was annexed, but was withdrawn along with this note in the third edition.

[1] This whole argument rests on data of sense, and takes little account of the data and inevitable presuppositions of moral experience, without which scientific inferences from sensuous phenomena are untrustworthy.

Lys. Bless me! How came you to entertain so wild a notion?

Alc. You know we profess to follow reason wherever it leads. And in short I have been reasoned into it.

Lys. Reasoned! You should say, amused with words, bewildered with sophistry.

Euph. Have you a mind to hear the same reasoning that led Alciphron and me step by step, that we may examine whether it be sophistry or no?

Lys. As to that I am very easy. I guess all that can be said on that head. It shall be my business to help my friend out, whatever arguments drew him in.

Euph. Will you admit the premises and deny the conclusions?

Lys. What if I admit the conclusion?

Euph. How! will you grant there is a God?

Lys. Perhaps I may.

Euph. Then we are agreed.

Lys. Perhaps not.

Euph. O Lysicles, you are a subtle adversary. I know not what you would be at.

Lys. You must know then that at bottom the *being* of a God is a point in itself of small consequence, and a man may make this concession without yielding much. The great point is *what sense the word God is to be taken in*[1]. The very Epicureans allowed the being of gods; but then they were indolent gods, unconcerned with human affairs. Hobbes allowed a corporeal God: and Spinosa held the universe to be God. And yet nobody doubts they were staunch free-thinkers. I could wish indeed the word God were quite omitted; because in most minds it is coupled with a sort of superstitious awe, the very root of all religion. I shall not, nevertheless, be much disturbed,

[1] This is still the 'great point.' Does 'God' connote conscious life and voluntary agency; or is the word only a name for abstract relations of reason, presupposed in intelligible experience; or not even for this, but for an Unknowable at the root of all? Also is the term rightly applied to the 'gods' of Polytheism, or to any merely superhuman agent, as distinguished from the Absolute Being, the ground of all that exists or can exist? Is it applicable to a Power acting capriciously, not absolutely and necessarily good, and not making for the goodness of all persons that exist? Is religion only fear or awe of any power that is superhuman?

though the name be retained, and the being of a God allowed in any sense but in that of a Mind which knows all things, and beholds human actions, like some judge or magistrate, with infinite observation and intelligence. The belief of a God in this sense fills a man's mind with scruples, lays him under constraints, and embitters his very being: but in another sense it may be attended with no great ill consequence. This I know was the opinion of our great Diagoras, who told me he would never have been at the pains to find out a demonstration that there was no God [1], if the received notion of God had been the same with that of some Fathers and Schoolmen.

Euph. Pray what was that?

17. *Lys.* You must know, Diagoras, a man of much reading and inquiry, had discovered that once upon a time the most profound and speculative divines, finding it impossible to reconcile the attributes of God, taken in the common sense, or in any known sense, with human reason, and the appearances of things, taught that the words *knowledge, wisdom, goodness,* and such like, when spoken of the Deity, must be understood in a quite different sense from what they signify in the vulgar acceptation, or from anything that we can form a notion of or conceive [2]. Hence, whatever objections might be made against the attributes of God they easily solved—by denying those attributes belonged to God, in this, or that, or any known particular sense or notion; which was the same thing as to deny they belonged to Him at all. And thus denying the attributes of God, they in effect denied His being, though perhaps they were not aware of it.

[1] He elsewhere attributes this 'demonstration' to Anthony Collins. Surely neither atheism nor theism is scientifically demonstrable. The alternative would now seem to be between an agnostic issue of the final problem, as even relatively insoluble, and tacit recognition of a theistic faith in experience, identical in fact with causal faith, in the deepest meaning of causality. All reasoning about things or persons presupposes the ultimate reasonableness or divineness of the universe of reality.

[2] It has been held by eminent theologians, e. g. recently by Dean Mansel, that *knowledge, wisdom,* and *goodness,* in our meaning of those terms, are applicable to God only analogically, or at least relatively to *our* highest point of view, while they are inadequate to Deity at the absolute or divine point of view.

Suppose, for instance, a man should object that future contingencies were inconsistent with the Foreknowledge of God, because it is repugnant that certain knowledge should be of an uncertain thing: it was a ready and an easy answer to say that this may be true with respect to knowledge taken in the common sense, or in any sense that we can possibly form any notion of; but that there would not appear the same inconsistency between the contingent nature of things and Divine Foreknowledge, taken to signify somewhat that we know nothing of, which in God supplies the place of what we understand by knowledge; from which it differs not in quantity or degree of perfection, but altogether, and in kind, as light doth from sound;—and even more, since these agree in that they are both sensations; whereas knowledge in God hath no sort of resemblance or agreement with any notion that man can frame of knowledge. The like may be said of all the other attributes, which indeed may by this means be equally reconciled with everything or with nothing. But all men who think must needs see this is cutting knots and not untying them. For, how are things reconciled with the Divine attributes when these attributes themselves are in every intelligible sense denied; and, consequently, the very notion of God taken away, and nothing left but the name, without any meaning annexed to it? In short, the belief that there is an unknown subject of attributes absolutely unknown[1] is a very innocent doctrine; which the acute Diagoras well saw, and was therefore wonderfully delighted with this system[2].

18. For, said he, if this could once make its way and obtain in the world, there would be an end of all natural or rational religion, which is the basis both of the Jewish and the Christian: for he who comes to God, or enters

[1] Like the supposed material substance against which Berkeley argues in his *Principles*, and *Dialogues*.

[2] That 'our line is,' as Hume says, 'too short to fathom such immense abysses' as are involved in a complete solution of the final problem of existence from the point of view of omniscience, is no reason for dissolving our faith-venture in omnipotent wisdom and goodness, in the highest meaning of those words that is attainable in the progressive evolution of thought—if that faith-venture is the basis of human experience.

himself in the church of God, must first believe that there is a God in some intelligible sense; and not only that there is *something in general*, without any proper notion, though never so inadequate, of any of its qualities or attributes: for this may be fate, or chaos, or plastic nature, or anything else as well as God. Nor will it avail to say —There is something in this unknown being *analogous* to knowledge and goodness; that is to say, which produceth those effects which we could not conceive to be produced by men, in any degree, without knowledge and goodness. For, this is in fact to give up the point in dispute between theists and atheists—the question having always been, not whether there was a Principle (which point was allowed by all philosophers, as well before as since Anaxagoras), but whether this Principle was a νοῦς, a thinking intelligent being: that is to say, whether that order, and beauty, and use, visible in natural effects, could be produced by anything but a Mind or Intelligence, in the proper sense of the word? And whether there must not be true, real, and proper knowledge, in the First Cause? We will, therefore, acknowledge that all those natural effects which are vulgarly ascribed to knowledge and wisdom proceed from a being in which there is, properly speaking, no knowledge or wisdom at all, but only something else, which in reality is the cause of those things which men, for want of knowing better, ascribe to what they call knowledge and wisdom and understanding. You wonder perhaps to hear a man of pleasure, who diverts himself as I do, philosophize at this rate. But you should consider that much is to be got by conversing with ingenious men, which is a short way to knowledge, that saves a man the drudgery of reading and thinking.

And, now we have granted to you that there is a God in this indefinite sense, I would fain see what use you can make of this concession. You cannot argue from unknown attributes, or, which is the same thing, from attributes in an unknown sense. You cannot prove that God is to be loved for His goodness, or feared for His justice, or respected for His knowledge: all which consequences, we own, would follow from those attributes admitted in an intelligible sense. But we deny that those or any other consequences can be drawn from

attributes admitted in no particular sense, or in a sense which none of us understand. Since, therefore, nothing can be inferred from such an account of God, about conscience, or worship or religion, you may even make the best of it. And, not to be singular, we will use the name too, and so at once there is an end of atheism.

Euph. This account of a Deity is new to me. I do not like it, and therefore shall leave it to be maintained by those who do.

19. *Cri.* It is not new to me. I remember not long since to have heard a minute philosopher triumph upon this very point; which put me on inquiring what foundation there was for it in the Fathers or Schoolmen. And, for aught that I can find, it owes its original to those writings which have been published under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite [1]. The author of which, it must be owned, hath written upon the Divine attributes in a very singular style. In his treatise of the Celestial Hierarchy [2], he saith that God is something above all essence and life, ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν οὐσίαν καὶ ζωήν; and again, in his treatise of the Divine Names [3], that He is above all wisdom and understanding, ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν σοφίαν καὶ σύνεσιν, *ineffable and innominable*, ἄρρητος καὶ ἀνώνυμος; the wisdom of God he terms an unreasonable, unintelligent, and foolish wisdom; τὴν ἄλογον, καὶ ἄνουν, καὶ μωρὰν σοφίαν. But then the reason he gives for expressing himself in this strange manner is, that the Divine wisdom is the

[1] The books attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, who was said to be a contemporary of the Apostles, and first Bishop of Athens, were in vogue among the mystics of the Middle Ages. They belong probably to the third or fourth century, if not to a later period. They are entitled *De Hierarchia Cœlesti*, *De Nominibus Divinis*, *De Hierarchia Ecclesiastica*, and *De Theologia Mystica*. Various editions appeared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In common with some of the early Fathers of the Church, they allege, in strong language, man's necessary ignorance of God, and deny that οὐσία can properly be affirmed of Deity. God, according to the pseudo-Dionysius, transcends all negation and all affirmation (ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν καὶ θέσιν). The hyperbolical language of Dionysius, and even of some Fathers of the Church, hardly falls short of the paradox of Oken, which identifies God with Nothing. He is ὑπεράγνωστος (more than unknown), ἀνύπαρκτος (without existence), ἀνούσιος (unsubstantial).

[2] [*De Hierarch. Cœlest.* cap. 2.]—AUTHOR.

[3] [*De Nom. Div.* cap. 7.]—AUTHOR.

cause of all reason, wisdom, and understanding, and therein are contained the treasures of all wisdom and knowledge. He calls God ὑπέρσοφος and ὑπέρζως; as if wisdom and life were words not worthy to express the Divine perfections: and he adds that the attributes unintelligent and unperceiving must be ascribed to the Divinity, not κατ' ἔλλειψιν, by way of defect, but καθ' ὑπεροχήν, by way of eminency; which he explains by our giving the name of darkness to light inaccessible. And, notwithstanding the harshness of his expressions in some places, he affirms over and over in others—that God knows all things; not that He is beholden to the creatures for His knowledge, but by knowing Himself, from whom they all derive their being, and in whom they are contained as in their cause. It was late before these writings appear to have been known in the world; and, although they obtained credit during the age of the Schoolmen, yet, since critical learning hath been cultivated, they have lost that credit, and are at this day given up for spurious, as containing several evident marks of a much later date than the age of Dionysius. Upon the whole, although this method of growing in expression and dwindling in notion, of clearing up doubts by nonsense, and avoiding difficulties by running into affected contradictions, may perhaps proceed from a well-meant zeal, yet it appears not to be according to knowledge; and, instead of reconciling atheists to the truth, hath, I doubt, a tendency to confirm them in their own persuasion. It should seem, therefore, very weak and rash in a Christian to adopt this harsh language of an apocryphal writer preferably to that of the Holy Scriptures. I remember, indeed, to have read of a certain philosopher, who lived some centuries ago, that used to say—if these supposed works of Dionysius had been known to the primitive Fathers, they would have furnished them admirable weapons against the heretics, and would have saved a world of pains. But the event since their discovery hath by no means confirmed his opinion.

It must be owned, the celebrated Picus of Mirandula[1],

[1] John Picus, Count of Mirandula, who lived in the fifteenth century, sought to harmonize Plato and Aristotle, and referred the philosophy of Plato to the books of Moses. The disputation in which he proposed to defend his famous nine hundred theses never

among his nine hundred conclusions (which that prince, being very young, proposed to maintain by public disputation at Rome), hath this for one—to wit, that it is more improper to say of God, He is an intellect or intelligent Being, than to say of a reasonable soul that it is an angel: which doctrine it seems was not relished. And Picus, when he comes to defend it, supports himself altogether by the example and authority of Dionysius, and in effect explains it away into a mere verbal difference—affirming that neither Dionysius nor himself ever meant to deprive God of knowledge, or to deny that He knows all things; but that, as reason is of kind peculiar to man, so by intellection he understands a kind or manner of knowing peculiar to angels; and that the knowledge which is in God is more above the intellection of angels than angel is above man. He adds that, as his tenet consists with admitting the most perfect knowledge in God, so he would by no means be understood to exclude from the Deity intellection itself, taken in the common or general sense, but only that peculiar sort of intellection proper to angels, which he thinks ought not to be attributed to God any more than human reason. Picus[1], therefore, though he speaks as the apocryphal Dionysius, yet, when he explains himself, it is evident he speaks like other men. And, although the forementioned books of the Celestial Hierarchy and of the Divine Names, being attributed to a saint and martyr of the apostolical age, were respected by the Schoolmen, yet it is certain they rejected or softened his harsh expressions, and explained away or reduced his doctrine to the received notions taken from Holy Scripture and the light of nature.

20. Thomas Aquinas expresseth his sense of this point in the following manner. All perfections, saith he, derived from God to the creatures are in a certain higher sense, or (as the Schoolmen term it) eminently in God. Whenever therefore, a name borrowed from any perfection in the creature is attributed to God, we must exclude from its signification everything that belongs to the imperfect

took place. They were published at Rome in 1486.

[1] [*Pic. Mirand. in Apolog.* p. 155, ed. Bas.]—AUTHOR.

manner wherein that attribute is found in the creature. Whence he concludes that knowledge in God is not a habit but a pure act[1]. And again, the same Doctor observes that our intellect gets its notions of all sorts of perfections from the creatures, and that as it apprehends those perfections so it signifies them by names. Therefore, saith he, in attributing these names to God we are to consider two things: first the perfections themselves, as goodness, life, and the like, which are properly in God; and secondly, the manner which is peculiar to the creature, and cannot, strictly and properly speaking, be said to agree to the Creator[2].

And although Suarez[3], with other Schoolmen, teacheth that the mind of man conceiveth knowledge and will to be in God as faculties or operations, by analogy only to created beings, yet he gives it plainly as his opinion that when knowledge is said not to be properly in God it must be understood in a sense including imperfection, such as discursive knowledge, or the like imperfect kind found in the creatures[4]: and that, none of those imperfections in the knowledge of men or angels belonging to the formal notion of knowledge, or to knowledge as such, it will not thence follow that knowledge, in its proper formal sense, may not be attributed to God. And of knowledge taken in general for the clear evident understanding of all truth, he expressly affirms that it is in God, and that this was never denied by any philosopher who believed a God[5]. It was, indeed, a current opinion in the schools that even Being itself should be attributed analogically to God and the creatures. That is, they held that God, the supreme,

[1] [*Sum. Theolog.* Part I. quest. xiv. art. i.]—AUTHOR.

[2] [*Ibid.* quest. xiii. art. iii.]—AUTHOR.

[3] Suarez, the Spanish Thomist, who died in 1617. See his *Disputationes Metaphysicæ*, xxx, 'Quid Deus Sit.'

[4] This implies that discursive knowledge, or reasoning (included in knowledge as that term is applicable to man) is an 'imperfection' inevitable to finite intelligence, but inconsistent with omniscient intuition. If we were able to know all things in all their relations in a single intellectual view, discursive thought or reasoning would seem to be superfluous. *Man* advances in knowledge through the medium of what is supposed to be already known, i.e. by means of premisses in which conclusions are virtually contained.

[5] [*Suarez, Dis. Metaph.* tom. II. disp. xxx. sect. 15.]—AUTHOR.

independent, self-originate cause and source of all beings, must not be supposed to *exist* in the same sense with created beings; not that He exists less truly, properly, or formally than they, but only because He exists in a more eminent and perfect manner[1].

21. But, to prevent any man's being led, by mistaking the scholastic use of the terms *analogy* and *analogical*, into an opinion that we cannot frame in any degree a true and proper notion of attributes applied by analogy, or, in the school phrase, predicated analogically, it may not be amiss to inquire into the true sense and meaning of those words. Every one knows that *analogy* is a Greek word used by mathematicians to signify a similitude of proportions. For instance, when we observe that two is to six as three is to nine, this similitude or equality of proportion is termed analogy. And, although proportion strictly signifies the habitude or relation of one quantity to another, yet, in a looser and translated sense, it hath been applied to signify every other habitude; and, consequently, the term analogy comes to signify all similitude of relations or habitudes whatsoever. Hence the Schoolmen tell us there is analogy between intellect and sight; forasmuch as intellect is to the mind what sight is to the body, and that he who governs the state is analogous to him who steers a ship. Hence a prince is analogically styled a pilot, being to the state as a pilot is to his vessel[2].

For the further clearing of this point, it is to be observed that a twofold analogy is distinguished by the Schoolmen — metaphorical and proper. Of the first kind there are frequent instances in Holy Scripture, attributing human parts and passions to God. When He is represented as having a finger, an eye, or an ear; when He is said to repent, to be angry, or grieved; every one sees that analogy is metaphorical. Because those parts and passions, taken in the proper signification, must in every degree necessarily, and from the formal nature of the thing, include imperfection. When, therefore, it is said—the

[1] That is to say, life in the Universal Power is *mysteriously above*, not *below*, the personal conscious life we experience, and in which we are manifested, through inward consciousness, to ourselves.

[2] [Vide *Cajetan. de Nom. Analog.* cap. 3.]—AUTHOR.

finger of God appears in this or that event, men of common sense mean no more but that it is as truly ascribed to God as the works wrought by human fingers are to man: and so of the rest. But the case is different when wisdom and knowledge are attributed to God. Passions and senses, as such, imply defect; but in knowledge simply, or as such, there is no defect[1]. Knowledge, therefore, in the proper formal meaning of the word, may be attributed to God *proportionably*, that is, preserving a proportion to the infinite nature of God[2]. We may say, therefore, that as God is infinitely above man, so is the knowledge of God infinitely above the knowledge of man, and this is what Cajetan calls *analogia proprie facta*. And after this same analogy we must understand all those attributes to belong to the Deity which in themselves simply, and as such, denote perfection. We may, therefore, consistently with what hath been premised, affirm that all sorts of perfection which we can conceive in a finite spirit are in God, but without any of that allay[3] which is found in the creatures. This doctrine, therefore, of analogical perfections in God, or our knowing God by analogy, seems very much misunderstood and misapplied by those who would infer from thence that we cannot frame any direct or proper notion, though never so inadequate, of knowledge or wisdom, as they are in the Deity; or understand any more of them than one born blind can of light and colours[4].

[1] But this does not forbid that in *human* knowledge there must be something which bars our attainment of the unity supposed in Omniscience, and which obliges us, as reasonable beings, to 'leave many things abrupt,' to use Bacon's words. The Infinite Reality may be necessarily inexplicable in our 'little systems,' and if so attempts to reach the perfect explanation must be irrational.

[2] What does this seemingly important qualification imply?

[3] 'allay'—alloy. So Bacon.

[4] Whether man can have only this *analogical* knowledge of God was much discussed in the early part of last century. Among other replies to Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696) was a *Letter* by Peter Browne, which appeared in 1699. It is there maintained that our only possible conception of God and the divine attributes is by a divine analogy with our experience of ourselves and of the things of sense, and that this metaphorical conception is sufficient for all human purposes. In 1709, Archbishop King published a Sermon on the *Consistency of Predestination and Foreknowledge with the Freedom of Man's Will*, which he defended, professedly on the same foundation of analogy, but in a manner which

22. And now, gentlemen, it may be expected I should ask your pardon for having dwelt so long on a point of metaphysics, and introduced such unpolished and unfashionable writers as the Schoolmen into good company: but, as Lysicles gave the occasion, I leave him to answer for it.

Lys. I never dreamt of this dry dissertation. But, if I have been the occasion of discussing these scholastic points, by my unluckily mentioning the Schoolmen, it was my first fault of the kind, and I promise it shall be the last. The meddling with crabbed authors of any sort is none of my taste. I grant one meets now and then with a good notion in what we call dry writers, such a one for example as this I was speaking of, which I must own struck my fancy. But then, for these we have such as Prodicus or Diagoras, who look into obsolete books, and save the rest of us that trouble.

Cri. So you pin your faith upon them?

Lys. It is only for some odd opinions, and matters of fact, and critical points. Besides, we know the men to whom we give credit: they are judicious and honest, and have no end to serve but truth. And I am confident some author or other has maintained the forementioned notion in the same sense as Diagoras related it.

Cri. That may be. But it never was a received notion, and never will, so long as men believe a God: the same arguments that prove a first cause proving an intelligent cause;—intelligent, I say, in the proper sense; wise and good in the true and formal acceptation of the words. Otherwise, it is evident that every syllogism brought to

seemed to imply that our highest conceptions of God are necessarily untrue. Bishop Browne defends at great length his account of the manner in which God can be knowable by man, first in his *Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* (1728), and again in *Things Divine and Supernatural conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* (1733). Browne, who was Provost of Trinity College, Dublin (1699–1710), when Berkeley was undergraduate and Fellow, was afterwards Bishop of Cork and Ross till his death in 1735. Tennemann says that Berkeley's *Alciphron* was written as a reply to him, although this applies only to a few sections in this Dialogue. Skelton's *Letter to the Authors of the Divine Analogy and the Minute Philosopher*, in vol. V. of Skelton's Works, is one of several other publications to which the question here discussed gave rise at the time.

prove those attributes, or, which is the same thing, to prove the being of a God, will be found to consist of four terms, and consequently can conclude nothing[1]. But for your part, Alciphron, you have been fully convinced that God is a thinking intelligent being, in the same sense with other spirits; though not in the same imperfect manner or degree[2].

23. *Alc.* And yet I am not without my scruples: for, with knowledge you infer wisdom, and with wisdom goodness. [[3] Though I cannot see that it is either wise or good to enact such laws as can never be obeyed.

Cri. Doth any one find fault with the exactness of geometrical rules, because no one in practice can attain to it? The perfection of a rule is useful, even though it is not reached. Many approach what all may fall short of.

Alc.] But how is it possible to conceive God so good and man so wicked? It may, perhaps, with some colour be alleged that a little soft shadowing of evil sets off the bright and luminous parts of the creation, and so contributes to the beauty of the whole piece; but for blots so large and so black it is impossible to account by that principle. That there should be so much vice, and so little virtue upon earth, and that the laws of God's kingdom should be so ill observed by His subjects, is what can never be reconciled with that surpassing wisdom and goodness of the supreme Monarch[4].

[1] Four terms in 'a syllogism,' a common fallacy, due to ambiguity in one of its terms. He charges Bishop Browne with this, because Browne holds that *wisdom*, *knowledge*, and *goodness* in God are not wisdom, knowledge, and goodness, in any human meaning of the terms, but only words which stand for mysteries that transcend human conception.

[2] Berkeley here makes our knowledge of God similar in origin and nature to our knowledge of other finite spirits—different only in degree. He conceives the universe as a hierarchy of spirits, with the Divine Spirit supreme. In the practical spirit of his philosophy, he evades the perplexities in which Infinity involves finite conception. Cf. Dial. III. sect. 10, 11, and Dial. VII. passim; also *New Theory of Vision*, sect. 81, 123; *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 119, 123-132; *Analyst*, passim.

[3] Added in second edition.

[4] This is the obtrusive mystery of the evil which we find in us and around us on this planet, which is a matter of fact, not merely a speculative incompetence in us.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, would you argue that a state was ill administered, or judge of the manners of its citizens, by the disorders committed in the jail or dungeon?

Alc. I would not.

Euph. And, for aught we know, this spot, with the few sinners on it, bears no greater proportion to the universe of intelligences than a dungeon doth to a kingdom. It seems we are led not only by revelation, but by common sense, observing and inferring from the analogy of visible things, to conclude there are innumerable orders of intelligent beings more happy and more perfect than man; whose life is but a span, and whose place, this earthly globe, is but a point, in respect of the whole system of God's creation. We are dazzled, indeed, with the glory and grandeur of things here below, because we know no better. But, I am apt to think, if we knew what it was to be an angel for one hour, we should return to this world, though it were to sit on the brightest throne in it, with vastly more loathing and reluctance than we would now descend into a loathsome dungeon or sepulchre[1].

24. *Cri.* To me it seems natural that such a weak, passionate, and short-sighted creature as man should be ever liable to scruples of one kind or other. But, as this same creature is apt to be over-positive in judging, and over-hasty in concluding, it falls out that these difficulties and scruples about God's conduct are made objections to His being[2]. And so men come to argue from their own defects against the Divine perfections. And, as the views and humours of men are different and often opposite, you may sometimes see them deduce the same atheistical con-

[1] Astronomers tell us of thirty millions of observed stars or suns, with, as we may suppose, attendant planetary systems; many, if not all, it may be, the homes of sentient beings and moral agents. With the conception thus suggested of the population of moral agents in existence, we are apt to ask 'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?'—in forgetfulness of the universality of providential order, which implies perfect adaptation of each to the whole, however insignificant *each* may seem. The law of gravitation does not overlook the grain of sand, and this law is only a subordinate in the infinite providential order.

[2] This mitigation of the mystery of sorrow and sin found in the sentient life and the morally responsible agents on this planet is more in the spirit of Butler's than of Browne's 'analogy.'

clusions from contrary premises. I knew an instance of this in two minute philosophers of my acquaintance, who used to argue each from his own temper against a Providence. One of them, a man of a choleric and vindictive spirit, said he could not believe a Providence, because London was not swallowed up or consumed by fire from heaven; the streets being, as he said, full of people who shew no other belief or worship of God but perpetually praying that He would damn, rot, sink, and confound them. The other, being of an indolent easy temper, concluded there could be no such thing as Providence; for that a being of consummate wisdom must needs employ himself better than in minding the prayers and actions and little interests of mankind[1].

Alc. After all, if God have no passions, how can it be true that vengeance is His? Or how can He be said to be jealous of His glory?

Cri. We believe that God executes vengeance without revenge, and is jealous without weakness, just as the mind of man sees without eyes, and apprehends without hands.

25. *Alc.* To put a period to this discourse, we will grant there is a God in this dispassionate sense: but what then? What hath this to do with Religion or Divine worship? To what purpose are all these prayers, and praises, and thanksgivings, and singing of psalms, which the foolish vulgar call serving God? What sense, or use, or end is there in all these things?

Cri. We worship God, we praise and pray to Him: not because we think that He is proud of our worship, or fond of our praise or prayers, and affected with them as mankind are; or that all our service can contribute in the least degree to His happiness or good: but because it is good for us to be so disposed towards God: because it is just and right, and suitable to the nature of things, and becoming the relation we stand in to our supreme Lord and Governor.

Alc. If it be good for us to worship God, it should seem that the Christian Religion, which pretends to teach men

[1] Is not the universe as perfectly adapted to the least as to the greatest thing and person and event?

the knowledge and worship of God, was of some use and benefit to mankind.

Cri. Doubtless.

Alc. If this can be made appear, I shall own myself very much mistaken.

Cri. It is now near dinner-time. Wherefore, if you please, we will put an end to this conversation for the present, and to-morrow morning resume our subject[1].

[1] Perhaps the preceding Dialogue insufficiently recognises the position of the inquirer who feels the difficulty of defining human intelligence as intermediate between agnostic nescience and a fully comprehended God. God totally unknowable under the conditions of human knowledge cannot engage faith: God fully comprehensible under human conditions is not God, and can be only a superhuman spirit. A visible God, whose existence is proved by the data of the senses, is not God: Omnipotent Goodness is neither presented to the senses, nor is it a logical conclusion from empirical data of sense. Is God not an inevitable, tacit if not conscious, presupposition, involved in all inferences from sensuous or any other data? For all real inferences rest upon the assumption that external nature and human nature —the universe, in short—is absolutely trustworthy, and cannot in the end put us to confusion, intellectually or morally. In other words, its *fundamental* divinity must be assumed as the foundation of all reasoning, and cannot otherwise be proved by reasoning.

That we are living or having our being in Omnipotent Goodness is thus the fundamental Faith, latent in man, which becomes more conscious and explicit in the providential progress of the individual and the race. Christianity claims to be its deepest, and truest, and most powerful manifestation. Its claim is discussed in the three following Dialogues.

THE FIFTH DIALOGUE[1]

1. Minute philosophers join in the cry, and follow the scent, of others. 2. Worship prescribed by the Christian religion suitable to God and man. 3. Power and influence of the Druids. 4. Excellency and usefulness of the Christian religion. 5. It ennobles mankind, and makes them happy. 6. Religion neither bigotry nor superstition. 7. Physicians and physic for the soul. 8. Character of the clergy. 9. Natural religion and human reason not to be disparaged. 10. Tendency and use of the Gentile religion. 11. Good effects of Christianity. 12. Englishmen compared with ancient Greeks and Romans. 13. The modern practice of duelling. 14. Character of the old Romans, how to be formed. 15. Genuine fruits of the Gospel. 16. Wars and factions not an effect of the Christian religion. 17. Civil rage and massacres in Greece and Rome. 18. Virtue of the ancient Greeks. 19. Quarrels of polemical divines. 20. Tyranny, usurpation, and sophistry of Ecclesiastics. 21. The universities censured. 22. Divine writings of a certain modern critic. 23. Learning the effect of religion. 24. Barbarism of the schools. 25. Restoration of learning and polite arts, to whom owing. 26. Prejudice and ingratitude of minute philosophers. 27. Their pretensions and conduct inconsistent. 28. Men and brutes compared with respect to religion. 29. Christianity the only means to establish natural religion. 30. Free-thinkers mistake their talents; have a strong imagination. 31. Tithes and church-lands. 32. Men distinguished from human creatures. 33. Distribution of mankind into birds, beasts, and fishes. 34. Plea for reason allowed, but unfairness taxed. 35. Freedom a blessing, or a curse, as it is used. 36. Priestcraft not the reigning evil.

1. We amused ourselves next day every one to his fancy till nine of the clock, when word was brought that the tea-table was set in the library, which is a gallery on the ground-floor, with an arched door at one end opening into a walk of limes; where, as soon as we had drunk tea, we

[1] The discussion here passes from theism in general to theism in its Christian form. The utility of Christianity and its institutions is the subject of the Fifth Dialogue. Faith in God as God appears in Christ has made men good and happy, more than any of the many other forms of religious faith. This is the thesis of Euphranor in the following Dialogue. The argument for the unique superiority of Chris-

were tempted by fine weather to take a walk which led us to a small mount of easy ascent, on the top whereof we found a seat under a spreading tree. Here we had a prospect on one hand of a narrow bay or creek of the sea, enclosed on either side by a coast beautified with rocks and woods, and green banks and farm-houses. At the end of the bay was a small town, placed upon the slope of a hill, which, from the advantage of its situation, made a considerable figure. Several fishing-boats and lighters, gliding up and down on a surface as smooth and bright as glass, enlivened the prospect. On the other side, we looked down on green pastures, flocks, and herds basking beneath in sunshine, while we, in our superior situation, enjoyed the freshness of air and shade[1].

Here we felt that sort of joyful instinct which a rural scene and fine weather inspire; and proposed no small pleasure in resuming and continuing our conference without interruption till dinner. But we had hardly seated ourselves and looked about us when we saw a fox run by the foot of our mount into an adjacent thicket. A few minutes after, we heard a confused noise of the opening of hounds, and winding of horns, and the roaring of country squires. While our attention was suspended by this event, a servant came running, out of breath, and told Crito that his neighbour Ctesippus, a squire of note, was fallen from his horse, attempting to leap over a hedge, and brought into the hall, where he lay for dead. Upon which we all rose, and walked hastily to the house, where we found Ctesippus just come to himself, in the midst of half-a-dozen sun-burnt squires, in frocks, and short wigs, and jockey-boots. Being asked how he did, he answered it was only a broken rib. With some difficulty Crito persuaded him to lie on a bed till the chirurgeon came. These fox-hunters, having been up early at their sport, were eager for dinner, which was accordingly hastened.

tianity in its individual and social influence may be compared with Tyndal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation, a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (1730), a treatise which seems to have been in view of Butler in his *Analogy*, as well as of Berkeley in this and the following Dialogue. That the comparative Science of Religions was unknown in Berkeley's day is apparent in the discussion.

[1] This is a picture of the town of Newport in Rhode Island, and of Narragansett Bay as seen from Honyman's Hill.

They passed the afternoon in a loud rustic mirth, gave proof of their religion and loyalty by the healths they drank, talked of hounds, and horses, and elections, and country fairs, till the chirurgeon, who had been employed about Ctesippus, desired he might be put into Crito's coach, and sent home, having refused to stay all night[1].

Our guests being gone, we reposed ourselves after the fatigue of this tumultuous visit, and next morning assembled again at the seat on the mount.

Now *Lysicles*, being a nice man and a *bel esprit*, had an infinite contempt for the rough manners and conversation of fox-hunters, and could not reflect with patience that he had lost, as he called it, so many hours in their company. I flattered myself, said he, that there had been none of this species remaining among us: strange that men should be diverted with such uncouth noise and hurry, or find pleasure in the society of dogs and horses! How much more elegant are the diversions of the town!

There seems, replied *Euphranor*, to be some resemblance between fox-hunters and free-thinkers; the former exerting their animal faculties in pursuit of game, as you gentlemen employ your intellectuals in the pursuit of truth. The kind of amusement is the same, although the object be different.

Lys. I had rather be compared to any brute upon earth than a rational brute.

Cri. You would then have been less displeased with my friend Pythocles, whom I have heard compare the common sort of minute philosophers not to the hunters but the hounds. For, said he, you shall often see among the dogs a loud babbler, with a bad nose, lead the unskilful part of the pack, who join all in his cry without following any scent of their own, any more than the herd of free-thinkers follow their own reason.

2. But Pythocles was a blunt man, and must never have known such reasoners among them as you gentlemen, who can sit so long at an argument, dispute every inch of

[1] This spirited picture of a fox chase is characteristic of Rhode Island when Berkeley lived there. See my *Life and Letters of Berkeley* (1871), p. 159.

ground, and yet know when to make a reasonable concession.

Lys. I do not know how it comes to pass, but methinks Alciphron makes concession for himself and me too. For my own part, I am not altogether of such a yielding temper; but yet I do not care to be singular neither.

Cri. Truly, Alciphron, when I consider where we are got, and how far we are agreed, I conceive it probable we may agree altogether in the end. You have granted that a life of virtue is upon all accounts eligible, as most conducive both to the general and particular good of mankind; and you allow that the beauty of virtue alone is not a sufficient motive with mankind to the practice of it. This led you to acknowledge that the belief of a God would be very useful in the world; and that, consequently, you should be disposed to admit any reasonable proof of His being: which point hath been proved, and you have admitted the proof.

If then we admit a Divinity, why not divine worship? And if worship, why not religion to teach this worship? And if a religion, why not the Christian, if a better cannot be assigned, and it be already established by the laws of our country, and handed down to us from our forefathers? Shall we believe a God, and not pray to Him for future benefits, nor thank Him for the past? Neither trust in His protection, nor love His goodness, nor praise His wisdom, nor adore His power? And if these things are to be done, can we do them in a way more suitable to the dignity of God or man that is prescribed by the Christian religion?

Alc. I am not, perhaps, altogether sure that religion must be absolutely bad for the public: but I cannot bear to see policy and religion walk hand in hand. I do not like to see human rights attached to the divine. I am for no *pontifex maximus*, such as in ancient or in modern Rome; no high-priest, as in Judea; no royal priests, as in Egypt and Sparta; no such things as Dairos of Japan, or Lamas of Tartary[1].

3. I knew a late witty gentleman of our sect who was a great admirer of the ancient Druids[2]. He had a mortal

[1] This section is one of the passages of which 'Sporus' complains.

[2] Probably Toland, whose *Critical History of the Celtic Religion* (1725) contains an account of the Druids.

antipathy to the present established religion, but used to say he should like well to see the Druids and their religion restored, as it anciently flourished in Gaul and Britain; for it would be right enough that there should be a number of contemplative men set apart to preserve a knowledge of arts and sciences, to educate youth, and teach men the immortality of the soul and the moral virtues. Such, said he, were the Druids of old, and I should be glad to see them once more established among us.

Cri. How would you like, Alciphron, that priests should have power to decide all controversies, and adjudge property, distribute rewards and punishments; that all who did not acquiesce in their decrees should be excommunicated, held in abhorrence, excluded from all honours and privileges, and deprived of the common benefit of the laws; and that now and then a number of laymen should be crammed together in a wicker-idol, and burnt for an offering to their pagan gods? How should you like living under such priests and such a religion?

Alc. Not at all. Such a situation would by no means agree with free-thinkers.

Cri. And yet such were the Druids and such their religion, if we may trust Caesar's account of them [1].

Lys. I am now convinced more than ever there ought to be no such thing as an established religion of any kind. Certainly all the nations of the world have been hitherto out of their wits. Even the Athenians themselves, the wisest and freest people upon earth, had I know not what foolish attachment to their established church. They offered, it seems, a talent as a reward to whoever should kill Diagoras the Melian, a free-thinker of those times, who derided their mysteries: and Protagoras, another of the same turn, narrowly escaped being put to death, for having wrote something that seemed to contradict their received notions of the gods. Such was the treatment our generous sect met with at Athens. And I make no doubt that these Druids would have sacrificed many a holocaust of free-thinkers. I would not give a single farthing to exchange one religion for another. Away with all together, root and branch, or you had as good do

[1] [*De Bello Gallico*, Lib. VI. 16.]—AUTHOR.

nothing. No Druids or priests of any sort for me: I see no occasion for any of them.

4. *Euph.* What Lysicles saith puts me in mind of the close of our last conference, wherein it was agreed in the following to resume the point we were then entered upon:—to wit, the use or benefit of the Christian religion, which Alciphron expected Crito should make appear.

Cri. I am the readier to undertake this point, because I conceive it to be no difficult one, and that one great mark of the truth of Christianity is, in my mind, its tendency to do good, which seems the north star to conduct our judgment in moral matters, and in all things of a practical nature; moral or practical truths being ever connected with universal benefit. But, to judge rightly of this matter, we should endeavour to act like Lysicles upon another occasion, taking into our view the sum of things, and considering principles as branched forth into consequences to the utmost extent we are able. We are not so much to regard the humour, or caprice, or imaginary distresses of a few idle men, whose conceit may be offended though their conscience cannot be wounded; but fairly to consider the true interest of individuals, as well as of human society. Now, the Christian religion, considered as a fountain of light, and joy, and peace; as a source of faith, and hope, and charity (and that it is so will be evident to whoever takes his notion of it from the gospel), must needs be a principle of happiness and virtue. And he who sees not that the destroying the principles of good actions must destroy good actions sees nothing: and he who, seeing this, shall yet persist to do it, if he be not wicked, who is?

5. To me it seems the man can see neither deep nor far, who is not sensible of his own misery, sinfulness, and dependence; who doth not perceive that this present world is not designed or adapted to make rational souls happy; who would not be glad of getting into a better state; and who would not be overjoyed to find that the road leading thither was the love of God and man, the practising every virtue, the living reasonably while we are here upon earth, proportioning our esteem to the value of things, and so using this world as not to abuse it. For

this is what Christianity requires. It neither enjoins the nastiness of the Cynic, nor the insensibility of the Stoic. Can there be a higher ambition than to overcome the world, or a wiser than to subdue ourselves, or a more comfortable doctrine than the remission of sins, or a more joyful prospect than that of having our base nature renewed and assimilated to the Deity, our being made fellow-citizens with angels, and sons of God? Did ever Pythagoreans, or Platonists, or Stoics, even in idea or in wish, propose to the mind of man purer means, or a nobler end? How great a share of our happiness depends upon hope! How totally is this extinguished by the minute philosophy! On the other hand, how is it cherished and raised by the gospel! Let any man who thinks in earnest but consider these things, and then say which he thinks deserveth best of mankind—he who recommends, or he who runs down Christianity? Which he thinks likelier to lead a happy life, to be a hopeful son, an honest dealer, a worthy patriot—he who sincerely believes the gospel, or he who believes not one tittle of it; he who aims at being a child of God, or he who is contented to be thought, and to be, one of Epicurus's hogs? And, in fact, do but scan the characters, and observe the behaviour of the common sort of men on both sides: observe, and say which live most agreeably to the dictates of reason? How things should be, the reason is plain; how they are, I appeal to fact.

6. *Alc.* It is wonderful to observe how things change appearance, as they are viewed in different lights, or by different eyes. The picture, Crito, that I form of religion is very unlike yours, when I consider how it unmans the soul, filling it with absurd reveries, and slavish fears; how it extinguishes the gentle passions, inspiring a spirit of malice, and rage, and persecution; when I behold bitter resentments and unholy wrath in those very men who preach up meekness and charity to others.

Cri. It is very possible that gentlemen of your sect may think religion a subject beneath their attention; but yet it seems that whoever sets up for opposing any doctrine should know what it is he disputes against. Know, then, that religion is the virtuous mean between incredulity and superstition. We do not therefore contend for super-

stitious follies, or for the rage of bigots. What we plead for is, religion against profaneness, law against confusion, virtue against vice, the hope of a Christian against the despondency of an atheist. I will not justify bitter resentments and unholy wrath in any man, much less in a Christian, and least of all in a clergyman. But, if sallies of human passion should sometimes appear even in the best, it will not surprise any one who reflects on the sarcasms and ill manners with which they are treated by the minute philosophers. For, as Cicero somewhere observes, *Habet quendam aculeum contumelia, quem pati prudentes ac viri boni difficillime possunt.* But, although you might sometimes observe particular persons, professing themselves Christians, run into faulty extremes of any kind, through passion and infirmity, while infidels of a more calm and dispassionate temper shall perhaps behave better—yet these natural tendencies on either side prove nothing, either in favour of infidel principles, or against Christian. If a believer doth evil, it is owing to the man, not to his belief. And if an infidel doth good, it is owing to the man, and not to his infidelity.

7. *Lys.* To cut this matter short, I shall borrow an allusion to physic, which one of you made use of against our sect. It will not be denied that the clergy pass for physicians of the soul, and that religion is a sort of medicine which they deal in and administer. If then souls in great numbers are diseased and lost, how can we think the physician skilful, or his physic good? It is a common complaint that vice increases, and men grow daily more and more wicked. If a shepherd's flock be diseased or unsound, who is to blame but the shepherd; for neglecting, or not knowing how to cure them? A fig therefore for such shepherds, such physic, and such physicians, who, like other mountebanks, with great gravity, and elaborate harangues, put off their pills to the people, who are never the better for them.

Euph. Nothing seems more reasonable than this remark, that men should judge of a physician and his physic by its effect on the sick. But pray, Lysicles, would you judge of a physician by those sick who take his physic, and follow his prescriptions, or by those who do not?

Lys. Doubtless by those who do.

Euph. What shall we say then, if great numbers refuse to take the physic, or instead of it take poison of a direct contrary nature, prescribed by others, who make it their business to discredit the physician and his medicines, to hinder men from using them, and to destroy their effect by drugs of their own? Shall the physician be blamed for the miscarriage of those people?

Lys. By no means.

Euph. By a parity of reason, should it not follow that the tendency of religious doctrines ought to be judged of by the effects which they produce, not upon all who hear them, but upon those only who receive or believe them?

Lys. It seems so.

Euph. Therefore, to proceed fairly, shall we not judge of the effects of religion by the religious, or faith by believers, of Christianity by Christians.

8. *Lys.* But I doubt these sincere believers are very few.

Euph. But will it not suffice to justify our principles, if, in proportion to the numbers which receive them, and the degree of faith with which they are received, they produce good effects? Perhaps the number of believers are not so few as you imagine; and if they were, whose fault is that so much as of those who make it their professed endeavour to lessen that number? And who are those but the minute philosophers?

Lys. I tell you it is owing to the clergy themselves, to the wickedness and corruption of clergymen.

Euph. And who denies but there may be minute philosophers even among the clergy?

Cri. In so numerous a body it is to be presumed there are men of all sorts. But, notwithstanding the cruel reproaches cast upon that order by their enemies, an equal observer of men and things will, if I mistake not, be inclined to think those reproaches owing as much to other faults as those of the clergy; especially if he considers the declamatory manner of those who censure them.

Euph. My knowledge of the world is too narrow for me to pretend to judge of the virtue, and merit, and liberal attainments of men in the several professions. Besides,

I should not care for the odious work of comparison. But I may venture to say the clergy of this country where I live are by no means a disgrace to it; on the contrary, the people seem much the better for their example and doctrine. But supposing the clergy to be (what all men certainly are) sinners and faulty; supposing you might spy out here and there among them even great crimes and vices, what can you conclude against the profession itself from its unworthy professors, any more than from the pride, pedantry, and bad lives of some philosophers against philosophy, or of lawyers against law?

[[1]9. *Cri.* It is certainly right to judge of principles from their effects; but then we must know them to be effects of those principles. It is the very method I have observed with respect to religion and the minute philosophy. And I can honestly aver that I never knew any man or family grow worse in proportion as they grew religious: but I have often observed that minute philosophy is the worst thing that can get into a family, the readiest way to impoverish, divide, and disgrace it.]

Alc. By the same method of tracing causes from their effects, I have made it my observation that the love of truth, virtue, and the happiness of mankind are specious pretexts, but not the inward principles that set divines at work: else why should they affect to abuse human reason, to disparage natural religion, to traduce the philosophers, as they universally do?

Cri. Not so universally perhaps as you imagine. A Christian, indeed, is for confining reason within its due bounds; and so is every reasonable man. If we are forbid meddling with unprofitable questions, vain philosophy, and science falsely so called, it cannot be thence inferred that all inquiries into profitable questions, useful philosophy, and true science are unlawful. A minute philosopher may indeed impute, and perhaps a weak brother may imagine, those inferences, but men of sense will never make them. God is the common father of lights; and all knowledge really such, whether natural

[1] In the first and second editions these three sentences form the conclusion of Euphranor's speech.

or revealed, is derived from the same source of light and truth. To amass together authorities upon so plain a point would be needless. It must be owned some men's attributing too much to human reason hath, as is natural, made others attribute too little to it. But thus much is generally acknowledged—that there is a natural religion, which may be discovered and proved by the light of reason, to those who are capable of such proofs. But it must be withal acknowledged that precepts and oracles from heaven are incomparably better suited to popular improvement and the good of society than the reasonings of philosophers; and, accordingly, we do not find that natural or rational religion, as such, ever became the popular national religion of any country[1].

10. *Alc.* It cannot be denied that in all heathen countries there have been received, under the colour of religion, a world of fables and superstitious rites. But I question whether they were so absurd and of so bad influence as is vulgarly represented, since their respective legislators and magistrates must, without doubt, have thought them useful.

Cri. It were needless to inquire into all the rites and notions of the Gentile world. This hath been largely done when it was thought necessary. And whoever thinks it worth while may be easily satisfied about them. But as to the tendency and usefulness of the heathen religion in general, I beg leave to mention a remark of St. Augustine's[2], who observes that the heathens in their religion had no assemblies for preaching, wherein the people were to be instructed what duties or virtues the gods required,

[1] How does he intend to distinguish 'revealed' from 'natural' knowledge of God, seeing that in the preceding Dialogue he has represented God as revealing Himself to us—speaking to us—in the intelligible signs that are presented to our eyes? 'Natural or rational religion' does not originate in 'the reasonings of philosophers,' if it is tacitly *presupposed* in *all* reasonings about what is real, although the philosopher may shew the rational inevitableness of the presupposition. Consistently with this, divine revelation presented in Christ may awaken latent (so-called) natural religion in degrees and ways otherwise unattainable, making theistic faith more obviously reasonable and spiritually satisfying than it could be otherwise.

[2] [*De Civitate Dei*, Lib. II.]—AUTHOR.

no place or means to be taught what Persius[1] exhorts them to learn :—

> Disciteque ô miseri, et causas cognoscite rerum,
> Quid sumus, et quidnam victuri gignimur.

Alc. This is the true spirit of the party, never to allow a grain of use or goodness to anything out of their own pale; but we have had learned men who have done justice to the religion of the Gentiles.

Cri. We do not deny that there was something useful in the old religions of Rome and Greece, and some other pagan countries. On the contrary, we freely own they produced some good effects on the people. But then these good effects were owing to the truths contained in those false religions: the truer therefore the more useful. I believe you will find it a hard matter to produce any useful truth, any moral precept, any salutary principle or notion, in any Gentile system, either of religion or philosophy, which is not comprehended in the Christian, and either enforced by stronger motives, or supported by better authority, or carried to a higher point of perfection.

11. *Alc.* Consequently you would have us think ourselves a finer people than the ancient Greeks or Romans.

Cri. If by finer you mean better, perhaps we are; and if we are not, it is not owing to the Christian religion, but to the want of it.

Alc. You say 'perhaps we are.' I do not pique myself on my reading: but should be very ignorant to be capable of being imposed on in so plain a point. What! compare Cicero or Brutus to an English patriot, or Seneca to one of our parsons! Then that invincible constancy and vigour of mind, that disinterested and noble virtue, that adorable public spirit you so much admire, are things in them so well known, and so different from our manners, that I know not how to excuse your *perhaps*. Euphranor, indeed, who passeth his life in this obscure corner, may possibly mistake the characters of our times, but you who know the world, how could you be guilty of such a mistake?

Cri. O Alciphron, I would by no means detract from

[1] [*Sat.* III.]—AUTHOR.

the noble virtue of ancient heroes. But I observe those great men were not the minute philosophers of their times; that the best principles upon which they acted are common to them with Christians, of whom it would be no difficult matter to assign, if not in our own times, yet within the compass of our own history, many instances in every kind of worth and virtue, public or private, equal to the most celebrated of the ancients. Though perhaps their story might not have been so well told, set off with such fine lights and colourings of style, or so vulgarly known and considered by every schoolboy. But though it should be granted that here and there a Greek or Roman genius, bred up under strict laws and severe discipline, animated to public virtue by statues, crowns, triumphal arches, and such rewards and monuments of great actions, might attain to a character and fame beyond other men: yet this will prove only that they had more spirit, and lived under a civil polity more wisely ordered in certain points than ours; which advantages of nature and civil institution will be no argument for their religion, or against ours. On the contrary, it seems an invincible proof of the power and excellency of the Christian religion that, without the help of those civil institutions and incentives to glory, it should be able to inspire a phlegmatic people with the noblest sentiments, and soften the rugged manners of northern boors into gentleness and humanity; and that these good qualities should become national, and rise and fall in proportion to the purity of our religion, as it approaches to, or recedes from, the plan laid down in the gospel.

12. To make a right judgment of the effects of the Christian religion, let us take a survey of the prevailing notions and manners of this very country where we live, and compare them with those of our heathen predecessors.

Alc. I have heard much of the glorious light of the gospel, and should be glad to see some effects of it in my own dear country, which, by the bye, is one of the most corrupt and profligate upon earth, notwithstanding the boasted purity of our religion. But it would look mean and diffident to affect a comparison with the barbarous heathen from whence we drew our original. If

you would do honour to your religion, dare to make it with the most renowned heathens of antiquity.

Cri. It is a common prejudice to despise the present, and overrate remote times and things. Something of this seems to enter into the judgments men make of the Greeks and Romans. For, though it must be allowed those nations produced some noble spirits, and great patterns of virtue, yet, upon the whole, it seems to me, they were much inferior, in point of real virtue and good morals, even to this corrupt and profligate nation, as you are now pleased to call it in dishonour to our religion; however you may think fit to characterize it when you would do honour to the minute philosophy. This, I think, will be plain to any one who shall turn off his eyes from a few shining characters, to view the general manners and customs of those people. Their insolent treatment of captives, even of the highest rank and softer sex, their unnatural exposing of their own children, their bloody gladiatorian spectacles, compared with the common notions of Englishmen, are to me a plain proof that our minds are much softened by Christianity. Could anything be more unjust than the condemning a young lady to the most infamous punishment and death for the guilt of her father, or a whole family of slaves, perhaps some hundreds, for a crime committed by one? Or more abominable than their bacchanals and unbridled lusts of every kind? which, notwithstanding all that has been done by minute philosophers to debauch the nation, and their successful attempts on some parts of it, have not yet been matched among us, at least not in every circumstance of impudence and effrontery. While the Romans were poor they were temperate; but, as they grew rich, they became luxurious to a degree that is hardly believed or conceived by us. It cannot be denied the old Roman spirit was a great one. But it is as certain there have been numberless examples of the most resolute and clear courage in Britons, and in general from a religious cause. Upon the whole, it seems an instance of the greatest blindness and ingratitude that we do not see and own the exceeding great benefits of Christianity, which, to omit higher considerations, hath so visibly softened, polished, and embellished our manners.

Alc. O Crito! we are alarmed at cruelty in a foreign shape, but overlook it in a familiar one. Else how is it possible that you should not see the inhumanity of that barbarous custom of duelling, a thing avowed, and tolerated, and even reputable among us? Or that, seeing this, you suppose our Englishmen of a more gentle disposition than the old Romans, who were altogether strangers to it?

Cri. I will by no means make an apology for every Goth that walks the streets, with a determined purpose to murder any man who shall but spit in his face, or give him the lie. Nor do I think the Christian religion is in the least answerable for a practice so directly opposite to its precepts, and which obtains only among the idle part of the nation, your men of fashion; who, instead of law, reason, or religion, are governed by fashion. Be pleased to consider that what may be, and truly is, a most scandalous reproach to a Christian country, may be none at all to the Christian religion: for the Pagan encouraged men in several vices, but the Christian in none.

Alc. Give me leave to observe that what you now say is foreign to the purpose. For, the question, at present, is not concerning the respective tendencies of the Pagan and the Christian religions, but concerning our manners, as actually compared with those of ancient heathens, who, I aver, had no such barbarous custom as duelling.

Cri. And I aver that, bad as this is, they had a worse: and that was poisoning. By which we have reason to think there were many more lives destroyed than by this Gothic crime of duelling: inasmuch as it extended to all ages, sexes, and characters, and as its effects were more secret and unavoidable; and as it had more temptations, interest as well as passion, to recommend it to wicked men. And for the fact, not to waste time, I refer you to the Roman authors themselves.

Lys. It is very true. Duelling is not so general a nuisance as poisoning, nor of so base a nature. This crime, if it be a crime, is in a fair way to keep its ground in spite of the law and the gospel. The clergy never preach against it, because themselves never suffer by it: and the man of honour must not appear against the means of vindicating honour.

Cri. Though it be remarked by some of your sect, that the clergy are not used to preach against duelling, yet I neither think the remark itself just, nor the reason assigned for it. In effect, one half of their sermons, all that is said of charity, brotherly love, forbearance, meekness, and forgiving injuries, is directly against this wicked custom; by which the clergy themselves are so far from never suffering, that perhaps they will be found, all things considered, to suffer oftener than other men.

Lys. How do you make this appear?

Cri. An observer of mankind may remark two kinds of bully, the fighting and the tame, both public nuisances; the former (who is the more dangerous animal, but by much the less common of the two) employs himself wholly and solely against the laity, while the tame species exert their talents upon the clergy. The qualities constituent of this tame bully are natural rudeness joined with a delicate sense of danger. For, you must know, the force of inbred insolence and ill manners is not diminished, though it acquire a new determination, from the fashionable custom of calling men to account for their behaviour. Hence you may often see one of these tame bullies ready to burst with pride and ill-humour, which he dares not vent, till a parson has come in the way to his relief. And the man of raillery, who would as soon bite off his tongue as break a jest on the profession of arms in the presence of a military man, shall instantly brighten up, and assume a familiar air with religion and the church before ecclesiastics. Dorcon, who passeth for a poltroon and stupid in all other company, and really is so, when he is got among clergymen affects a quite opposite character. And many Dorcons there are, who owe their wit and courage to this passive order.

14. *Alc.* But to return to the point in hand, can you deny the old Romans were as famous for justice and integrity as men in these days for the contrary qualities?

Cri. The character of the Romans is not to be taken from the sentiments of Tully, or Cato's actions, or a shining passage here and there in their history, but from the prevailing tenor of their lives and notions. Now, if they and our modern Britons were weighed in this same

equal balance, you will, if I mistake not, appear to have been prejudiced in favour of the old Romans against your own country—probably because it professeth Christianity. Whatever instances of fraud or injustice may be seen in Christians carry their own censure with them, in the care that is taken to conceal them, and the shame that attends their discovery. There is, even at this day, a sort of modesty in all our public councils and deliberations. And I believe the boldest of our minute philosophers would hardly undertake, in a popular assembly, to propose anything parallel to the rape of the Sabines, the most unjust usage of Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, or the ungrateful treatment of Camillus; which, as a learned father observes, were instances of iniquity agreed to by the public body of the Romans. And if Rome in her early days were capable of such flagrant injustice, it is most certain she did not mend her manners as she grew great in wealth and empire, having produced monsters in every kind of wickedness, as far exceeding other men as they surpassed them in power. I freely acknowledge the Christian religion hath not had the same influence upon the nation that it would in case it had been always professed in its purity, and cordially believed by all men. But I will venture to say that if you take the Roman history from one end to the other, and impartially compare it with your own, you will neither find them so good, nor your countrymen so bad, as you imagine. On the contrary, an indifferent eye may, I verily think, perceive a vein of charity and justice, the effect of Christian principles, run through the latter; which, though not equally discernible in all parts, yet discloseth itself sufficiently to make a wide difference upon the whole, in spite of the general appetites and passions of human nature, as well as of the particular hardness and roughness of the block out of which we were hewn. And it is observable (what the Roman authors themselves do often suggest) that even their virtues and magnanimous actions rose and fell with a sense of Providence and a future state, and a philosophy the nearest to the Christian religion.

15. Crito having spoke thus paused.

But *Alciphron*, addressing himself to Euphranor and me, said—It is natural for men, according to their several

educations and prejudices, to form contrary judgments upon the same things, which they view in very different lights. Crito, for instance, imagines that none but salutary effects proceed from religion: on the other hand, if you appeal to the general experience and observation of other men, you shall find it grown into a proverb that religion is the root of evil:—

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.

And this not only among Epicureans or other ancient heathens, but among moderns speaking of the Christian religion. Now, methinks it is unreasonable to oppose against the general concurring opinion of the world, the observation of a particular person, or particular set of zealots, whose prejudice sticks close to them, and ever mixeth with their judgment; and who read, collect, and observe with an eye, not to discover the truth, but to defend their prejudice.

Cri. Though I cannot think with Alciphron, yet I must own I admire his address and dexterity in argument. Popular and general opinion is by him represented, on certain occasions, to be a sure mark of error. But when it serves his ends that it should seem otherwise, he can as easily make it a character of truth. But it will by no means follow that a profane proverb, used by the friends and admired authors of a minute philosopher, must therefore be a received opinion, much less a truth grounded on the experience and observation of mankind. Sadness may spring from guilt or superstition, and rage from bigotry; but darkness might as well be supposed the natural effect of sunshine, as sullen and furious passions to proceed from the glad tidings and divine precepts of the gospel. What is the sum and substance, scope and end of Christ's religion, but the love of God and man? To which all other points and duties are relative and subordinate, as parts or means, as signs, principles, motives, or effects. Now, I would fain know how it is possible for evil or wickedness of any kind to spring from such a source? I will not pretend there are no evil qualities in Christians, nor good in minute philosophers. But this I affirm, that, whatever evil is in us, our principles certainly lead to good; and, whatever

good there may be in you, it is most certain your principles lead to evil [1].

16. *Alc.* It must be owned there is a fair outside, and many plausible things may be said for the Christian religion taken simply as it lies in the gospel. But it is the observation of one of our great writers [2], that the first Christian preachers very cunningly began with the fairest face and the best moral doctrines in the world. It was all love, charity, meekness, patience, and so forth. But when by this means they had drawn over the world and got power, they soon changed their appearance, and shewed cruelty, ambition, avarice, and every bad quality.

Cri. That is to say, some men very cunningly preached and underwent a world of hardships, and laid down their lives to propagate the best principles and the best morals, to the end that others some centuries after might reap the benefit of bad ones. Whoever may be cunning, there is not much cunning in the maker of this observation.

Alc. And yet ever since this religion hath appeared in the world we have had eternal feuds, factions, massacres, and wars, the very reverse of that hymn with which it is introduced in the gospel :—'Glory be to God on high, on earth peace, good-will towards men.'

Cri. This I will not deny. I will even own that the Gospel and the Christian religion have been often the pretexts for these evils; but it will not thence follow they were the cause. On the contrary, it is plain they could not be the real proper cause of these evils; because a rebellious, proud, revengeful, quarrelsome spirit is directly opposite to the whole tenor and most express precepts of Christianity: a point so clear that I shall not prove it. And, secondly, because all those evils you mention were as frequent, nay, much more frequent, before the Christian religion was known in the world. They are the common product of the passions and vices of mankind, which are sometimes covered with the mask of religion by wicked men, having the form of godliness without the power of it. This truth seems so plain that I am surprised how any

[1] Cf. sect. 6, 20.

[2] See Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* vol. III. pp. 114, 115.

man of sense, knowledge, and candour can make a doubt of it.

17. Take but a view of heathen Rome: what a scene is there of faction, and fury, and civil rage! Let any man consider the perpetual feuds between the patricians and plebeians, the bloody and inhuman factions of Marius and Sylla, Cinna and Octavius, and the vast havoc of mankind, during the two famous triumvirates. To be short, let any man of common candour and common sense but cast an eye from one end to the other of the Roman story, and behold that long scene of seditions, murders, massacres, proscriptions, and desolations of every kind, enhanced by every cruel circumstance of rage, rapine, and revenge; and then say, whether those evils were introduced into the world with the Christian religion, or whether they are not less frequent now than before?

Alc. The ancient Romans, it must be owned, had a high and fierce spirit, which produced eager contentions and very bloody catastrophes. The Greeks, on the other hand, were a polite and gentle sort of men, softened by arts and philosophy. It is impossible to think of the little states and cities of Greece without wishing to have lived in those times, without admiring their policy, and envying their happiness.

Cri. Men are apt to consider the dark sides of what they possess, and the bright ones of things out of their reach. A fine climate, elegant taste, polite amusements, love of liberty, and a most ingenious inventive spirit for arts and sciences were indisputable prerogatives of ancient Greece. But, as for peace and quietness, gentleness and humanity, I think we have plainly the advantage: for those envied cities composed of gentle Greeks were not without their factions, which persecuted each other with such treachery, rage, and malice that in respect of them our factious folk are mere lambs. To be convinced of this truth, you need only look into Thucydides[1], where you will find those cities in general involved in such bitter factions as for fellow-citizens without the formalities of war to murder one another, even in their senate-houses and their temples;

[1] [Thucyd. Lib. III.]—Author.

no regard being had to merit, rank, obligation, or nearness of blood. And if human nature boiled up to so vehement a pitch in the politest people, what wonder that savage nations should scalp, roast, torture, and destroy each other, as they are known to do? It is therefore plain that without religion there would not be wanting pretexts for quarrels and debates; all which can very easily be accounted for by the natural infirmities and corruption of men. It would not perhaps be so easy to account for the blindness of those who impute the most hellish effects to the most Divine principle, if they could be supposed in earnest and to have considered the point. One may daily see ignorant and prejudiced men make the most absurd blunders. But that free-thinkers, divers to the bottom of things, fair inquirers, and openers of eyes, should be capable of such a gross mistake is what one would not expect.

18. *Alc.* The rest of mankind we could more easily give up: but as for the Greeks, men of the most refined genius express a high esteem of them; not only on account of those qualities which you think fit to allow them, but also for their virtues.

Cri. I shall not take upon me to say how far some men may be prejudiced against their country, or whether others may not be prejudiced in favour of it. But, upon the fullest and most equal observation that I am able to make, it is my opinion that, if by virtue is meant truth, justice, gratitude, there is incomparably more virtue now at this day in England than at any time could be found in ancient Greece. Thus much will be allowed—that we know few countries, if any, where men of eminent worth, and famous for deserving well of the public, met with harder fate, and were more ungratefully treated than in the most polite and learned of the Grecian states[1]. Though Socrates, it must be owned, would not allow that those statesmen, by adorning the city, augmenting the fleet, or extending the commerce of Athens, deserved well of their country; or could with justice complain of the ungrateful returns made by their fellow-citizens, whom, while they were in power, they had taken no care to make better men, by

[1] Cicero, *De Repub.* I. 3.

improving and cultivating their minds with the principles of virtue, which if they had done, they needed not to have feared their ingratitude. If I were to declare my opinion, what gave the chief advantage to Greeks and Romans and other nations which have made the greatest figure in the world, I should be apt to think it was a peculiar reverence for their respective laws and institutions, which inspired them with steadiness and courage, and that hearty generous love of their country: by which they did not merely understand a certain language or tribe of men, much less a particular spot of earth, but included a certain system of manners, customs, notions, rites, and laws, civil and religious.

Alc. Oh! I perceive your drift: you would have us reverence the laws and religious institutions of our country. But herein we beg to be excused, if we do not think fit to imitate the Greeks, or to be governed by any authority whatsoever.

[[1] *Cri.* So far from it. If Mahometanism were established by authority, I make no doubt those very free-thinkers, who at present applaud Turkish maxims and manners to that degree you would think them ready to turn Turks, would then be the first to exclaim against them.]

Alc. But to return: as for wars and factions, I grant they ever were, and ever will be in the world, upon some pretext or other, as long as men are men.

19. But there is a sort of war and warriors peculiar to Christendom which the heathens had no notion of: I mean disputes in theology, and polemical divines, which the world hath been wonderfully pestered with: these teachers of peace, meekness, concord, and what not! if you take their word for it: but, if you cast an eye upon their practice, you find them to have been in all ages the most contentious, quarrelsome, disagreeing crew, that ever appeared upon earth. To observe the skill and sophistry, the zeal and eagerness, with which those barbarians, the school-divines, split hairs and contest about chimeras, gives me more indignation, as being more absurd and a greater scandal to human reason, than all the ambitious intrigues, cabals, and politics of the court of Rome.

[1] This of *Crito* was introduced in the second edition.

Cri. If divines are quarrelsome, that is not so far forth as divine, but as undivine and unchristian. Justice is a good thing; and the art of healing is excellent; nevertheless, in the administering of justice or physic, men may be wronged or poisoned. But as wrong cannot be justice, or the effect of justice, so poison cannot be medicine, or the effect of medicine; so neither can pride or strife be religion, or the effect of religion. Having premised this, I acknowledge you may often see hot-headed bigots engage themselves in religious as well as civil parties, without being of credit or service to either. And as for the Schoolmen in particular, I do not in the least think the Christian religion concerned in the defence of them, their tenets, or their method of handling them: but, whatever futility there may be in their notions, or inelegancy in their language, in pure justice to truth one must own—they neither banter nor rail nor declaim in their writings, and are so far from shewing fury or passion that perhaps an impartial judge will think the minute philosophers are by no means to be compared with them, for keeping close to the point, or for temper and good manners. But, after all, if men are puzzled, wrangle, talk nonsense, and quarrel about religion, so they do about law, physic, politics, and everything else of moment. I ask whether, in these professions, or in any other where men have refined and abstracted, they do not run into disputes, chicane, nonsense, and contradictions, as well as in divinity? And yet this doth not hinder but there may be many excellent rules, and just notions, and useful truths, in all those professions. In all disputes human passions too often mix themselves, in proportion as the subject is conceived to be more or less important. But we ought not to confound the cause of man with the cause of God, or make human follies an objection to Divine truths. It is easy to distinguish what looks like wisdom from above, and what proceeds from the passion and weakness of men. This is so clear a point, that one would be tempted to think the not doing it was an effect, not of ignorance, but of something worse.

20. The conduct we object to minute philosophers is a natural consequence of their principles. Whatsoever

they can reproach us with is an effect, not of our principles, but of human passion and frailty[1].

Alc. This is admirable. So we must no longer object to Christians the absurd contentions of Councils, the cruelty of Inquisitions, the ambition and usurpation of churchmen[2].

Cri. You may object them to Christians, but not to Christianity. If the Divine Author of our religion and His disciples have sowed a good seed; and, together with this good seed, the enemies of His gospel (among whom are to be reckoned the minute philosophers of all ages) have sowed bad seeds, whence spring tares and thistles; is it not evident, these bad weeds cannot be imputed to the good seed, or to those who sowed it? Whatever you do or can object against ecclesiastical tyranny, usurpation, or sophistry, may, without any blemish or disadvantage to religion, be acknowledged by all true Christians; provided still that you impute those wicked effects to their true cause, not blaming any principles or persons for them but those that really produce or justify them. Certainly, as the interests of Christianity are not to be supported by unchristian methods, whenever these are made use of, it must be supposed there is some other latent principle which sets them at work. If the very court of Rome hath been known, from motives of policy, to oppose settling the Inquisition in a kingdom where the secular power hath endeavoured to introduce it in spite of that court[3]; we may well suppose that, elsewhere, factions of state and political views of princes have given birth to transactions seemingly religious, wherein at bottom neither religion, nor church, nor churchmen, were at all considered. As no man of common sense and honesty will engage in a general defence of ecclesiastics, so I think no man of common candour can condemn them in general. Would you think it reasonable to blame all statesmen, lawyers, or soldiers for the faults committed by those of their profession; though in other times, or in other countries, and influenced by other maxims and other discipline? And if not, why do you measure with one rule to the clergy, and another to the laity? Surely the best reason

[1] Cf. sect. 6, 15.

[2] Cf. Dial. I. sect. 3.

[3] [P. Paolo, *Istoria dell' Inquisitione*, p. 42.]—AUTHOR.

that can be given for this is prejudice. Should any man rake together all the mischiefs that have been committed in all ages and nations by soldiers and lawyers, you would, I suppose, conclude from thence, not that the state should be deprived of those useful professions, but only that their exorbitances should be guarded against and punished. If you took the same equitable course with the clergy, there would indeed be less to be said against you; but then you would have much less to say. This plain obvious consideration, if every one who read considered, would lessen the credit of your declaimers.

Alc. But when all is said that can be said, it must move a man's indignation to see reasonable creatures, under the notion of study and learning, employed in reading and writing so many voluminous tracts *de lanâ caprinâ*.

Cri. I shall not undertake the vindication of theological writings, a general defence being as needless as a general charge is groundless. Only let them speak for themselves; and let no man condemn them upon the word of a minute philosopher. But we will imagine the very worst, and suppose a wrangling pedant in divinity disputes, and ruminates, and writes upon a refined point, as useless and unintelligible as you please. Suppose this same person bred a layman, might he not have employed himself in tricking bargains, vexatious law-suits, factions, seditions, and such like amusements, with much more prejudice to the public? Suffer then curious wits to spin cobwebs: where is the hurt?

Alc. The mischief is, what men want in light they commonly make up in heat: zeal and ill-nature, being weapons constantly exerted by the partisans, as well as champions, on either side; and those perhaps not mean pedants or book-worms. You shall often see even the learned and eminent divine lay himself out in explaining things inexplicable, or contend for a barren point of theory, as if his life, liberty, or fortune were at stake.

Cri. No doubt all points in divinity are not of equal moment. Some may be too finely spun, and others have more stress laid on them than they deserve. Be the subject what it will, you shall often observe that a point, by being controverted, singled out, examined, and nearly inspected, groweth considerable to the same eye that,

perhaps, would have overlooked it in a large and comprehensive view. Nor is it an uncommon thing to behold ignorance and zeal united in men who are born with a spirit of party, though the church or religion have in truth but small share in it. Nothing is easier than to make a *caricatura* (as the painters call it) of any profession upon earth: but, at bottom, there will be found nothing so strange in all this charge upon the clergy, as the partiality of those who censure them, in supposing the common defects of mankind peculiar to their order, or the effect of religious principles.

Alc. Other folks may dispute or squabble as they please, and nobody mind them; but, it seems, these venerable squabbles of the clergy pass for learning, and interest mankind. To use the words of the most ingenious Characterizer of our times:—'A ring is made, and readers gather in abundance. Every one *takes party* and encourages his own side. "This shall be my champion!—This man for my money!—Well hit, on our side!—Again, a good stroke!—There he was even with him!—Have at him the next bout!—Excellent sport[1]!"'

Cri. Methinks I trace the man of quality and breeding in this delicate satire, which so politely ridicules those arguments, answers, defences, and replications which the press groans under.

Alc. To the infinite waste of time and paper, and all the while nobody is one whit the wiser. And who indeed can be the wiser for reading books upon subjects quite out of the way, incomprehensible, and most wretchedly written? What man of sense or breeding would not abhor the infection of prolix pulpit eloquence; or of that dry, formal, pedantic, stiff, and clumsy style, which smells of the lamp and the college?

21. They who have the weakness to reverence the universities as seats of learning must needs think this a strange reproach; but it is a very just one. For the most ingenious men are now agreed, that they are only the nurseries of prejudice, corruption, barbarism, and pedantry[2].

[1] [*Characteristics*, vol. III. c. 2, p. 9.]—AUTHOR.

[2] Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, vol. III.

Lys. For my part, I find no fault with universities. All I know is that I had the spending of three hundred pounds a year in one of them, and think it the cheerfullest time of my life. As for their books and style, I had not leisure to mind them.

Cri. Whoever hath a mind to weed will never want work; and he that shall pick out bad books on every subject will soon fill his library. I do not know what theological writings Alciphron and his friends may be conversant in; but, I will venture to say, one may find among our English divines many writers who, for compass of learning, weight of matter, strength of argument, and purity of style are not inferior to any in our language. It is not my design to apologize for the universities: whatever is amiss in them (and what is there perfect among men?) I heartily wish amended. But I dare affirm, because I know it to be true, that any impartial observer, although they should not come up to what in theory he might wish or imagine, will nevertheless find them much superior to those that in fact are to be found in other countries, and far beyond the mean picture that is drawn of them by minute philosophers. It is natural for those to rail most at places of education who have profited least by them. Weak and fond parents will also readily impute to a wrong cause those corruptions themselves have occasioned, by allowing their children more money than they know how to spend innocently. And too often a gentleman who has been idle at the college, and kept idle company, will judge of a whole university from his own cabal.

Alc. Crito mistakes the point. I vouch the authority, not of a dunce, or a rake, or absurd parent, but of the most consummate critic this age has produced. This great man characterizeth men of the church and universities with the finest touches and most masterly pencil. What do you think he calls them?

Euph. What?

Alc. Why, the black tribe, magicians, formalists, pedants, bearded boys; and having sufficiently derided and exploded them, and their mean, ungenteel learning, he sets most admirable models of his own for good writing: and it must be acknowledged they are the finest things in our

language; as I could easily convince you, for I am never without something of that noble writer about me[1].

Euph. He is then a noble writer?

Alc. I tell you he is a nobleman.

Euph. But a nobleman who writes is one thing, and a noble writer another.

Alc. Both characters are coincident, as you may see.

22. Upon which Alciphron pulled a treatise out of his pocket, entitled *A Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author.* Would you behold, said he, looking round upon the company, a noble specimen of fine writing? do but dip into this book: which Crito opening, read verbatim as follows[2]:—

> 'Where then are the pleasures which ambition promises,
> And love affords? How's the gay world enjoy'd?
> Or are those to be esteem'd no pleasures
> Which are lost by dulness and inaction?
> But indolence is the highest pleasure.
> To live, and not to feel! To feel no trouble.
> What good then? Life itself. And is
> This properly to live? Is sleeping, life?
> Is this what I should study to prolong?
> Here the
> Fantastic tribe itself seems scandalized.
> A civil war begins: the major part
> Of the capricious dames do range themselves
> On reason's side,
> And declare against the languid Siren.
> Ambition blushes at the offered sweet.
> Conceit and Vanity take superior airs.
> Ev'n Luxury herself, in her polite
> And elegant humour, reproves th' apostate
> Sister,
> And marks her as an alien to true pleasure.
> Away, thou
> Drowsy phantom! haunt me no more; for I
> Have learn'd from better than thy sisterhood,
> That life and happiness consist in action
> And employment.
>
> But here a busy form solicits us—
> Active, industrious, watchful, and despising

[1] Shaftesbury. See *Characteristics*, vol. I. pp. 64, 333–335.

[2] [Part III. sect. 2.]—Author. See *Characteristics*, vol. I. pp. 318–320, here presented sarcastically in blank verse. The *Soliloquy* appeared in 1710.

Pains and labour. She wears the serious
Countenance of Virtue, but with features
Of anxiety and disquiet.
What is 't she mutters? What looks she on with
Such admiration and astonishment?
Bags! coffers! heaps of shining metal! What!
For the service of Luxury? For her
These preparations? Art thou then her friend,
Grave Fancy? Is it for her thou toilest?
No, but for provision against want.
But, luxury apart, tell me now,
Hast thou not already a competence?
'Tis good to be secure against the fear
Of starving. Is there then no death but this?
No other passage out of life? Are other doors
Secured if this be barr'd? Say, Avarice!
Thou emptiest of phantoms, is it not vile
Cowardice thou serv'st? What further have I then
To do with thee (thou doubly vile dependent)
When once I have dismiss'd thy patroness,
And despised her threats?

Thus I contend with Fancy and Opinion.'

Euphranor having heard thus far, cried out, What! will you never have done with your poetry? another time may serve: but why should we break off our conference to read a play?

You are mistaken, it is no play nor poetry, replied Alciphron, but a famous modern critic moralizing in prose. You must know this great man hath (to use his own words) revealed a *grand arcanum* to the world, having instructed mankind in what he calls *mirror-writing*, *self-discoursing practice*, and *author practice*, and shewed[1], that 'by virtue of an intimate recess we may discover a certain duplicity of soul, and divide our *self* into two parties,' or (as he varies the phrase) 'practically form the dual number.' In consequence whereof, he hath found out that a man may argue with himself; and not only with himself, but also with notions, sentiments, and vices, which by a marvellous prosopopœia he converts into so many ladies; and so converted, he confutes and confounds them in a Divine strain. Can anything be finer, bolder, or more sublime?

Euph. It is very wonderful. I thought, indeed, you had

[1] See *Characteristics*, vol. I. p. 169; also pp. 171, 195, 199, 205.

been reading a piece of tragedy. Is this he who despiseth our universities, and sets up for reforming the style and tastes of the age?

Alc. The very same. This is the admired critic of our times. Nothing can stand the test of his correct judgment, which is equally severe to poets and parsons. 'The British Muses (saith this great man[1]) lisp as in their cradles; and their stammering tongues, which nothing but youth and rawness can excuse, have hitherto spoken in wretched pun and quibble. Our dramatic Shakespear, our Fletcher, Jonson, and our epic Milton, preserve this style.' And, according to him, even our later authors, 'aiming at a false sublime, entertain our raw fancy and unpractised ear; which has not yet had leisure to form itself, and become truly musical.'

Euph. Pray what effect may the lessons of this great man, in whose eyes our learned professors are but bearded boys, and our most celebrated wits but wretched punsters, have had upon the public? Hath he rubbed off the college rust, cured the rudeness and rawness of our authors, and reduced them to his own attic standard? Do they aspire to his true sublime, or imitate his chaste unaffected style?

Alc. Doubtless the taste of the age is much mended: in proof whereof his writings are universally admired. When our author published this Treatise, he foresaw the public taste would improve apace; that arts and letters would grow to great perfection; that there would be a happy birth of genius: of all which things he spoke, as he saith himself, in a prophetic style.

Cri. And yet, notwithstanding the prophetical predictions of this critic, I do not find any science hath throve among us of late so much as the minute philosophy. In this kind, it must be confessed, we have had many notable productions. But whether they are such masterpieces for good writing, I leave to be determined by their readers.

23. In the meantime, I must beg to be excused if I cannot believe your great man on his bare word; when he would have us think that ignorance and ill-taste are owing to the Christian religion or the clergy, it being my sincere opinion

[1] *Characteristics*, vol. I. p. 217.

that whatever learning or knowledge we have among us is derived from that order. If those who are so sagacious at discovering a mote in other eyes would but purge their own, I believe they might easily see this truth. For, what but religion could kindle and preserve a spirit towards learning in such a northern rough people[1]? Greece produced men of active and subtile genius. The public conventions and emulations of their cities forwarded that genius; and their natural curiosity was amused and excited by learned conversation, in their public walks and gardens and porticos. Our genius leads to amusements of a grosser kind: we breathe a grosser and a colder air[1]; and that curiosity which was general in Athenians, and the gratifying of which was their chief recreation, is among our people of fashion treated like affectation, and as such banished from polite assemblies and places of resort; and without doubt would in a little time be banished the country, if it were not for the great reservoirs of learning, where those formalists, pedants, and bearded boys, as your profound critic calls them[2], are maintained by the liberality and piety of our predecessors. For, it is as evident that religion was the cause of those seminaries as it is that they are the cause or source of all the learning and taste which are to be found, even in those very men who are the declared enemies of our religion and public foundations. Every one, who knows anything, knows we are indebted for our learning to the Greek and Latin tongues. This those severe censors will readily grant. Perhaps they may not be so ready to grant, what all men must see, that we are indebted for those tongues to our religion. What else could have made foreign and dead languages in such request among us? What could have kept in being and handed them down to our times, through so many dark ages in which the world was wasted and disfigured by wars and violence? What, but a regard to the Holy Scriptures, and theological writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church? And in fact, do we not find that the learning of those times was solely in the hands of ecclesiastics; that they alone lighted the lamp in succession one from another, and transmitted it down to after ages;

[1] Cf. sect. 11, 14; also Dial. II. 17; III. 12.
[2] Cf. sect. 21.

and that ancient books were collected and preserved in their colleges and seminaries, when all love and remembrance of polite arts and studies was extinguished among the laity, whose ambition entirely turned to arms?

24. *Alc.* There is, I must needs say, one sort of learning undoubtedly of Christian original, and peculiar to the universities; where our youth spend several years in acquiring that mysterious jargon of Scholasticism; than which there could never have been contrived a more effectual method to perplex and confound human understanding. It is true, gentlemen are untaught by the world what they have been taught at the college: but then their time is doubly lost.

Cri. But what if this scholastic learning was not of Christian but of Mahometan original, being derived from the Arabs? And what if this grievance of gentlemen's spending several years in learning and unlearning this jargon be all grimace, and a specimen only of the truth and candour of certain minute philosophers, who raise great invectives from slight occasions, and judge too often without inquiring? Surely it would be no such deplorable loss of time, if a young gentleman spent a few months upon that so much despised and decried art of Logic, a surfeit of which is by no means the prevailing nuisance of this age. It is one thing to waste one's time in learning and unlearning the barbarous terms, wire-drawn distinctions, and prolix sophistry of the Schoolmen; and another to attain some exactness in defining and arguing—things perhaps not altogether beneath the dignity even of a minute philosopher. There was indeed a time when Logic was considered as its own object: and that art of reasoning, instead of being transferred to things, turned altogether upon words and abstractions; which produced a sort of leprosy in all parts of knowledge, corrupting and converting them into hollow verbal disputations in a most impure dialect. But those times are past; and that, which had been cultivated as the principal learning for some ages, is now considered in another light; and by no means makes that figure in the universities, or bears that part in the studies of young gentlemen educated there,

which is pretended by those admirable reformers of religion and learning, the minute philosophers.

25. But who were they that encouraged and produced the restoration of arts and polite learning? What share had the minute philosophers in this affair? Matthias Corvinus king of Hungary, Alphonsus king of Naples, Cosmus de Medicis, Picus of Mirandula, and other princes, and great men, famous for learning themselves, and for encouraging it in others with a munificent liberality, were neither Turks, nor Gentiles, nor minute philosophers. Who was it that transplanted and revived the Greek language and authors, and with them all polite arts and literature, in the west? Was it not chiefly Bessarion a cardinal, Marcus Musurus an archbishop, Theodore Gaza a private clergyman? Has there been a greater and more renowned patron and restorer of elegant studies in every kind, since the days of Augustus Cæsar, than Leo the Tenth, pope of Rome? Did any writers approach the purity of the classics nearer than the cardinals Bembus and Sadoletus, or than the bishops of Jovius and Vida? Not to mention an endless number of ingenious ecclesiastics, who flourished on the other side of the Alps in the golden age (as the Italians call it) of Leo the Tenth, and wrote, both in their own language and the Latin, after the best models of antiquity. It is true, this first recovery of learning preceded the Reformation, and lighted the way to it; but the religious controversies which ensued did wonderfully propagate and improve it in all parts of Christendom. And surely, the Church of England is at least as well calculated for the encouragement of learning as that of Rome. Experience confirms this observation; and I believe the minute philosophers will not be so partial to Rome as to deny it.

Alc. It is impossible your account of learning beyond the Alps should be true. The noble critic in my hands, having complimented the French, to whom he allows some good authors, asserts[1] of other foreigners, particularly the Italians, 'That they may be reckoned no better than the corrupters of true learning and erudition[2].'

[1] *Characteristics*, vol. I. p. 35, note.
[2] Ibid. p. 335, note.

Cri. With some sorts of critics, dogmatical censures and conclusions are not always the result of perfect knowledge or exact inquiry; and if they harangue upon taste, truth of art, a just piece, grace of style, attic elegance, and such topics, they are to be understood only as those that would fain talk themselves into reputation for courage. To hear Thrasymachus speak of resentment, duels, and point of honour, one would think him ready to burst with valour.

Lys. Whatever merit this writer may have as a demolisher, I always thought he had very little as a builder. It is natural for careless writers to run into faults they never think of; but for an exact and severe critic to shoot his bolt at random is unpardonable. If he, who professes at every turn a high esteem for polite writing, should yet despise those who most excel in it; one would be tempted to suspect his taste. But if the very man who of all men talks most about art, and taste, and critical skill, and would be thought to have most considered those points, should often deviate from his own rules, into the false sublime, or the *mauvaise plaisanterie*—what reasonable man would follow the taste and judgment of such a guide, or be seduced, or climb the steep ascent, or tread in the rugged paths of virtue on his recommendation?

26. *Alc.* But to return: methinks Crito makes no compliment to the genius of his country, in supposing that Englishmen might not have wrought out of themselves all art and science and good taste; without being beholden to church or universities, or ancient languages.

Cri. What might have been is only conjecture. What has been it is not difficult to know. That there is a vein in Britain, of as rich an ore as ever was in any country, I will not deny; but it lies deep, and will cost pains to come at: and extraordinary pains require an extraordinary motive. As for what lies next the surface, it seems but indifferent, being neither so good nor in such plenty as in some other countries. It was the comparison of an ingenious Florentine, that the celebrated poems of Tasso and Ariosto are like two gardens, the one of cucumbers, the other of melons. In the one you shall find few bad, but the best are not a very good fruit; in the other much

the greater part are good for nothing, but those that are good are excellent. Perhaps the same comparison may hold, between the English and some of their neighbours.

Alc. But suppose we should grant that the Christian religion and its seminaries might have been of use, in preserving or retrieving polite arts and letters; what then? Will you make this an argument of its truth?

Cri. I will make it an argument of prejudice and ingratitude in those minute philosophers, who object darkness, ignorance, and rudeness as an effect of that very thing which above all others hath enlightened and civilized and embellished their country; which is as truly indebted to it for arts and sciences (which nothing but religion was ever known to have planted in such a latitude) as for that general sense of virtue and humanity, and belief of a Providence and future state, which all the argumentation of minute philosophers hath not yet been able to abolish.

27. *Alc.* It is strange you should still persist to argue as if all the gentlemen of our sect were enemies to virtue, and downright atheists; though I have assured you of the contrary, and that we have among us several who profess themselves in the interests of virtue and natural religion, and have also declared that I myself do now argue upon that foot.

Cri. How can you pretend to be in the interests of natural religion, and yet be professed enemies of the Christian; the only established religion which includes whatever is excellent in the natural, and which is the only means of making those precepts, duties, and notions, so called, become reverenced throughout the world? Would not he be thought weak or insincere, who should go about to persuade people that he was much in the interests of an earthly monarch; that he loved and admired his government; when at the same time he shewed himself, on all occasions, a most bitter enemy of those very persons and methods which above all others contributed most to his service, and to make his dignity known and revered, his laws observed, or his dominion extended? And is not this what minute philosophers do, while they set up for advocates of God and religion, and yet do all they can to discredit Christians and their worship? It must be owned,

indeed, that you argue against Christianity, as the cause of evil and wickedness in the world; but with such arguments and in such a manner as might equally prove the same thing of civil government, of meat and drink, of every faculty and profession, of learning, of eloquence, and even of human reason itself. After all, even those of your sect who allow themselves to be called Deists, if their notions are thoroughly examined, will I fear be found to include little of religion in them[1]. As for the Providence of God watching over the conduct of human agents, and dispensing blessings or chastisements, the immortality of the soul, a final judgment, and future state of rewards and punishments; how few, if any, of your free-thinkers have made it their endeavour to possess men's minds with a serious sense of those great points of natural religion! How many, on the contrary, endeavour to render the belief of them doubtful or ridiculous! [[2] It must be owned there may be found men that, without any regard to these points, make some pretence to religion: but who shall think them in earnest? You shall sometimes see the very ringleaders of vice and profaneness write like men that would be thought to have virtue and piety at heart. This may, perhaps, prove them inconsistent writers, but can never prove them to be innocent. When a man's declared principles and peculiar tenets are utterly subversive of these things, whatever such an one saith of virtue, piety, and religion will be understood as mere deception, and compliance with common forms.]

Lys. To speak the truth, I, for my part, had never any liking to religion of any kind, either revealed or unrevealed; and I dare venture to say the same for those gentlemen of our sect that I am acquainted with, having never observed them guilty of so much meanness as even to mention the name of God with reverence, or to speak with the least regard of piety or any sort of worship. There may perhaps be found one or two formal pretenders to enthusiasm and devotion, in the way of natural religion, who laughed at Christians for publishing hymns and meditations, while they plagued the world with as bad of their own; but the sprightly men made a jest of all this,

[1] Cf. *Theory of Vision Vindicated*, sect. 2–6.

[2] The sentences within brackets were added in the second edition.

It seems to us mere pedantry. Sometimes, indeed, in good company one may hear a word dropped in commendation of honour and good-nature; but the former of these, by *connoisseurs*, is always understood to mean nothing but fashion; as the latter is nothing but temper and constitution, which guides a man just as appetite doth a brute.

28. And after all these arguments and notions, which beget one another without end, to take the matter short; neither I nor my friends for our souls could ever comprehend, why man might not do very well and govern himself without any religion at all, as well as a brute, which is thought the sillier creature of the two. Have brutes instincts, senses, appetites, and passions, to steer and conduct them? So have men, and reason over and above to consult upon occasion. From these premises, we conclude the road of human life is sufficiently lighted without religion.

Cri. Brutes having but small power, limited to things present or particular, are sufficiently opposed and kept in order by the force or faculties of other animals and the skill of man, without conscience or religion: but conscience is a necessary balance to human reason, a faculty of such mighty extent and power, especially towards mischief. Besides, other animals are, by the law of their nature, determined to one certain end or kind of being, without inclination or means either to deviate or go beyond it. But man hath in him a will and higher principle; by virtue whereof he may pursue different or even contrary ends; and either fall short of or exceed the perfection natural to his species in this world; as he is capable, either by giving up the reins to his sensual appetites, of degrading himself into the condition of brutes, or else by well ordering and improving his mind, of being transformed into the similitude of angels. Man alone of all animals hath understanding to know his God. What availeth this knowledge unless it be to ennoble man, and raise him to an imitation and participation of the Divinity? Or what could such ennoblement avail if to end with this life? Or how can these things take effect without religion? But the points of vice and virtue, man and beast, sense and intellect, have been already at large canvassed. What! Lysicles,

would you have us go back where we were three or four days ago?

Lys. By no means: I had much rather go forward, and make an end as soon as possible. But, to save trouble, give me leave to tell you once for all that, say what you can, you shall never persuade me so many ingenious agreeable men are in the wrong, and a pack of snarling sour bigots in the right.

29. *Cri.* O Lysicles! I neither look for religion among bigots, nor reason among libertines; each kind disgrace their several pretensions; the one owing no regard even to the plainest and most important truths, while the others exert an angry zeal for points of least concern. And surely whatever there is of silly, narrow, and uncharitable in the bigot, the same is in great measure to be imputed to the conceited ignorance and petulant profaneness of the libertine. And it is not at all unlikely that, as libertines make bigots, so bigots should make libertines, the extreme of one party being ever observed to produce a contrary extreme of another. And although, while these adversaries draw the rope of contention, reason and religion are often called upon, yet are they perhaps very little considered or concerned in the contest.

Lysicles, instead of answering Crito, turned short upon Alciphron. It was always my opinion, said he, that nothing could be sillier than to think of destroying Christianity, by crying up natural religion. Whoever thinks highly of the one can never, with a consistency, think meanly of the other; it being very evident that natural religion, without revealed, never was and never can be established or received anywhere, but in the brains of a few idle speculative men. I was aware what your concessions would come to. The belief of a God, virtue, a future state, and such fine notions are, as every one may see with half an eye, the very basis and corner-stone of the Christian religion. Lay but this foundation for them to build on, and you shall soon see what superstructures our men of divinity will raise from it. The truth and importance of those points once admitted, a man need be no conjuror to prove, upon that principle, the excellency and usefulness of the Christian religion. And then to be sure,

there must be priests to teach and propagate this useful religion. And if priests, a regular subordination without doubt in this worthy society, and a provision for their maintenance, such as may enable them to perform all their rites and ceremonies with decency, and keep their sacred character above contempt. And the plain consequence of all this is a confederacy between the prince and the priesthood to subdue the people;—so we have let in at once upon us, a long train of ecclesiastical evils, priestcraft, hierarchy, inquisition. We have lost our liberty and property, and put the nation to vast expense, only to purchase bridles and saddles for their own backs.

30. This being spoke with some sharpness of tone, and an upbraiding air, touched Alciphron to the quick, who replied nothing, but shewed confusion in his looks.

Crito smiling looked at Euphranor and me, then, casting an eye on the two philosophers, spoke as follows:—If I may be admitted to interpose good offices for preventing a rupture between old friends and brethren in opinion, I would observe that in this charge of Lysicles there is something right and something wrong. It seems right to assert, as he doth, that the real belief of natural religion will lead a man to approve of revealed; but it is as wrong to assert that Inquisitions, tyranny, and ruin must follow from thence. Your free-thinkers, without offence be it said, seem to mistake their talent. They imagine strongly, but reason weakly; mighty at exaggeration, and jejune in argument! Can no method be found to relieve them from the terror of that fierce and bloody animal an English parson? Will it not suffice to pare his talons without chopping off his fingers? Then they are such wonderful patriots for liberty and property! When I hear these two words in the mouth of a minute philosopher, I am put in mind of the *Teste di Ferro* at Rome. His Holiness, it seems, not having power to assign pensions on Spanish benefices to any but natives of Spain, always keeps at Rome two Spaniards, called *Teste di Ferro*, who have the name of all such pensions, but not the profit, which goes to Italians. As we may see every day both things and notions placed to the account of liberty and property which in reality neither have nor are meant to have any

share in them. What! Is it impossible for a man to be a Christian but he must be a slave; or a clergyman but he must have the principles of an inquisitor? I am far from screening and justifying an appetite of domination or tyrannical power in ecclesiastics. Some, who have been guilty in that respect, have sorely paid for it, and it is to be hoped they always will. But, having laid the fury and folly of the ambitious prelate, is it not time to look about and spy whether, on the other hand, some evil may not possibly accrue to the state from the overflowing zeal of an independent Whig? This I may affirm, without being at any pains to prove it, that the worst tyranny this nation ever felt was from the hands of patriots of that stamp.

31. *Lys.* I don't know. Tyranny is a harsh word, and sometimes misapplied. When spirited men of independent maxims create a ferment, or make a change in the state, he that loseth is apt to consider things in one light, and he that wins in another. In the mean time, this is certainly good policy, that we should be frugal of our money, and reserve it for better uses than to expend on the church and religion.

Cri. Surely the old apologue of the belly and members need not be repeated to such knowing men. It should seem as needless to observe, that all other states which ever made any figure in the world for wisdom and politeness have thought learning deserved encouragement as well as the sword; that grants for religious uses were as fitting as for knights' service; and foundations for propagating piety as necessary to the public welfare and defence as either civil or military establishments. [[1] In former times, when the clergy were a body much more numerous, wealthy, and powerful; when in their state of celibacy they gave no pledges to the public; when they enjoyed great exemptions and privileges above their fellow-subjects; when they owned obedience to a foreign potentate—the case was evidently and widely different from what it is in our days. And the not discerning or not owning this difference is no proof either of sagacity or honesty in the minute philosophers.] But I ask who

[1] The sentences within brackets were added in the second edition.

are at this expense, and what is this expense so much complained of?

Lys. As if you had never heard of church-lands and tithes!

Cri. But I would fain know how they can be charged as an expense, either upon the nation or private men. Where nothing is exported the nation loseth nothing: and it is all one to the public whether money circulates at home through the hands of a vicar or a squire. Then, as for private men, who, for want of thought, are full of complaint about the payment of tithes; can any man justly complain of it as a tax, that he pays what never belonged to him? The tenant rents his farm with this condition, and pays his landlord proportionately less than if his farm had been exempt from it: so he loseth nothing; it being all one to him, whether he pays his pastor or his landlord. The landlord cannot complain that he has not what he hath no right to, either by grant, purchase, or inheritance. This is the case of tithes; and as for the church-lands, he surely can be no free-thinker, nor any thinker at all, who doth not see that no man, whether noble, gentle, or plebeian, hath any sort of right or claim to them which he may not with equal justice pretend to all the lands in the kingdom.

Lys. At present indeed we have no right, and that is our complaint.

Cri. You would have then what you have no right to.

Lys. Not so either: what we would have is first a right conveyed by law, and, in the next place, the lands by virtue of such right.

Cri. In order to this, it might be expedient in the first place, to get an act passed for excommunicating from all civil rights every man that is a Christian, a scholar, and wears a black coat, as guilty of three capital offences against the public weal of this realm.

Lys. To deal frankly, I think it would be an excellent good act. It would provide at once for several deserving men, rare artificers in wit, and argument, and ridicule! who have, too many of them, but small fortunes, with a great arrear of merit towards their country, which they have so long enlightened and adorned *gratis*.

Euph. Pray tell me, Lysicles, are not the clergy legally possessed of their lands and emoluments?

Lys. Nobody denies it.

Euph. Have they not been possessed of them from time immemorial?

Lys. This too I grant.

Euph. They claim them by law and ancient prescription?

Lys. They do.

Euph. Have the oldest families of the nobility a better title?

Lys. I believe not. It grieves me to see so many overgrown estates in the hands of ancient families, on account of no other merit but what they brought with them into the world.

Euph. May you not then as well take their lands too, and bestow them on minute philosophers, as persons of more merit?

Lys. So much the better. This enlarges our view and opens a new scene: it is very delightful, in the contemplation of truth, to behold how one theory grows out of another.

Alc. Old Pætus used to say that if the clergy were deprived of their hire we should lose the most popular argument against them.

Lys. But, so long as men live by religion, there will never be wanting teachers and writers in defence of it.

Cri. And how can you be sure they would be wanting though they did not live by it; since it is well known Christianity had its defenders even when men died by it?

Lys. One thing I know: there is a rare nursery of young plants growing up, who have been carefully guarded against every air of prejudice, and sprinkled with the dew of our choicest principles: meanwhile, wishes are wearisome; and to our infinite regret nothing can be done, so long as there remains any prejudice in favour of old customs and laws and national constitutions, which, at bottom, we very well know and can demonstrate to be only words and notions.

32. But I can never hope, Crito, to make you think my schemes reasonable. We reason each right upon his own principles, and shall never agree till we quit our principles, which cannot be done by reasoning. We all talk of just, and right, and wrong, and public good, and all those things.

The names may be the same, but the notions and conclusions very different, perhaps diametrically opposite; and yet each may admit of clear proofs, and be inferred by the same way of reasoning. For instance, the gentlemen of the club which I frequent define man to be a social animal: consequently, we exclude from this definition all those human creatures of whom it may be said, we would rather have their room than their company. And such, though wearing the shape of man, are to be esteemed, in all account of reason, not as *men*, but only as *human creatures*. Hence it plainly follows that men of pleasure, men of humour, and men of wit are alone properly and truly to be considered as men. Whatever, therefore, conduceth to the emolument of such is for the good of mankind, and consequently very just and lawful, although seeming to be attended with loss or damage to other creatures: inasmuch as no real injury can be done in life or property to those who know not how to enjoy them. This we hold for clear and well-connected reasoning. But others may view things in another light, assign different definitions, draw other inferences, and perhaps consider what we suppose the very top and flower of the creation only as a wart or excrescence of human nature. From all which there must ensue a very different system of morals, politics, rights, and notions.

Cri. If you have a mind to argue we will argue; if you have more mind to jest, we will laugh with you.

Lys.

——— Ridentem dicere verum
Quid vetat?

This partition of our kind into men and human creatures, puts me in mind of another notion, broached by one of our club, whom we used to call the Pythagorean.

33. He made a threefold partition of the human species, into birds, beasts, and fishes, being of opinion that the road of life lies upwards, in a perpetual ascent through the scale of being: in such sort that the souls of insects after death make their second appearance in the shape of perfect animals, birds, beasts, or fishes; which upon their death are preferred into human bodies; and in the next stage into beings of a higher and more perfect kind. This

man we considered at first as a sort of heretic—because his scheme seemed not to consist with our fundamental tenet, the mortality of the soul: but he justified the notion to be innocent, inasmuch as it included nothing of reward or punishment, and was not proved by any argument which supposed or implied either incorporeal spirit or Providence, being only inferred, by way of analogy, from what he had observed in human affairs, the court, the church, and the army; wherein the tendency is always upwards from lower posts to higher. According to this system, the fishes are those men who swim in pleasure, such as *petits maitres*, *bons vivans*, and honest fellows. The beasts are dry, drudging, covetous, rapacious folk, and all those addicted to care and business, like oxen, and other dry-land animals, which spend their lives in labour and fatigue. The birds are airy notional men, enthusiasts, projectors, philosophers, and such-like: in each species every individual retaining a tincture of his former state, which constitutes what is called genius. If you ask me which species of human creatures I like best, I answer, the flying fish: that is, a man of animal enjoyment with a mixture of whim. Thus you see we have our creeds and our systems, as well as graver folks; with this difference, that they are not strait-laced but sit easy, to be slipped off or on, as humour or occasion serves. And now I can, with the greatest equanimity imaginable, hear my opinions argued against, or confuted.

34. *Alc.* It were to be wished all men were of that mind. But you should find a sort of men, whom I need not name, that cannot bear with the least temper to have their opinions examined or their faults censured. They are against reason, because reason is against them. For our parts we are all for liberty of conscience. If our tenets are absurd, we allow them to be freely argued and inspected; and by parity of reason we might hope to be allowed the same privilege with respect to the opinions of other men.

Cri. O Alciphron! wares that will not bear the light are justly to be suspected. Whatever therefore moves you to make this complaint, take my word I never will: but as hitherto I have allowed your reason its full scope, so for

the future I always shall. And though I cannot approve of railling or declaiming, not even in myself, whenever you have shewed me the way to it: yet this I will answer for, that you shall ever be allowed to reason as closely and as strenuously as you can. But, for the love of truth, be candid, and do not spend your strength and our time in points of no significancy, or foreign to the purpose, or agreed between us. We allow that tyranny and slavery are bad things: but why should we apprehend them from the clergy at this time? Rites and ceremonies we own are not points of chief moment in religion: but why should we ridicule things in their nature, at least, innocent, and which bear the stamp of supreme authority? That men in divinity, as well as other subjects, are perplexed with useless disputes, and are likely to be so as long as the world lasts, I freely acknowledge: but why must all the human weakness and mistakes of clergymen be imputed to wicked designs? Why indiscriminately abuse their character and tenets? Is this like candour, love of truth, and free-thinking? It is granted there may be found, now and then, spleen and ill-breeding in the clergy: but are not the same faults incident to English laymen of a retired education and country life? I grant there is infinite futility in the Schoolmen: but I deny that a volume of that doth so much mischief, as a page of minute philosophy. That weak or wicked men should, by favour of the world, creep into power and high stations in the church is nothing wonderful: and that in such stations they should behave like themselves is natural to suppose. But all the while it is evident that not the gospel but the world, not the spirit but the flesh, not God but the devil, puts them upon their unworthy achievements. We make no difficulty to grant that nothing is more infamous than vice and ignorance in a clergyman; nothing more base than a hypocrite, more frivolous than a pedant, more cruel than an inquisitor. But it must be also granted by you, gentlemen, that nothing is more ridiculous and absurd than for pedantic, ignorant, and corrupt men to cast the first stone at every shadow of their own defects and vices in other men.

35. *Alc.* When I consider the detestable state of slavery and superstition, I feel my heart dilate and expand itself

to grasp that inestimable blessing of independent liberty. This is the sacred and high prerogative, the very life and health of our English constitution. You must not therefore think it strange, if, with a vigilant and curious eye, we guard it against the minutest appearance of evil. You must even suffer us to cut round about, and very deep, and make use of the magnifying glass, the better to view and extirpate every the least speck which shall discover itself in what we are careful and jealous to preserve as the apple of our eye.

Cri. As for unbounded liberty, I leave it to savages, among whom alone I believe it is to be found: but, for the reasonable legal liberty of our constitution, I most heartily and sincerely wish it may for ever subsist and flourish among us. You and all other Englishmen cannot be too vigilant, or too earnest, to preserve this goodly frame, or to curb and disappoint the wicked ambition of whoever, layman or ecclesiastic, shall attempt to change our free and gentle government into a slavish or severe one. But what pretext can this afford for your attempts against religion, or indeed how can it be consistent with them? Is not the Protestant religion a main part of our legal constitution? I remember to have heard a foreigner remark, that we of this island were very good Protestants, but no Christians. But whatever minute philosophers may wish, or foreigners say, it is certain our laws speak a different language.

Alc. This puts me in mind of the wise reasoning of a certain sage magistrate, who, being pressed by the raillery and arguments of an ingenious man, had nothing to say for his religion but that ten millions of people inhabiting the same island might, whether right or wrong, if they thought good, establish laws for the worshipping of God in their temples, and appealing to Him in their courts of justice. And that in case ten thousand ingenious men should publicly deride and trample on those laws, it might be just and lawful for the said ten millions to expel the said ten thousand ingenious men out of their said island.

Euph. And pray, what answer would you make to this remark of the sage magistrate?

Alc. The answer is plain. By the law of nature, which is superior to all positive institutions, wit and knowledge

have a right to command folly and ignorance. I say, ingenious men have by natural right a dominion over fools.

Euph. What dominion over the laws and people of Great Britain minute philosophers may be entitled to by nature, I shall not dispute, but leave to be considered by the public.

Alc. This doctrine, it must be owned, was never thoroughly understood before our own times. In the last age, Hobbes and his followers, though otherwise very great men, declared for the religion of the magistrate; probably because they were afraid of the magistrate: but times are changed, and the magistrates may now be afraid of us.

Cri. I allow the magistrate may well be afraid of you in one sense, I mean, afraid to trust you. This brings to my thoughts a passage on the trial of Leander for a capital offence. That gentleman having picked out and excluded from his jury, by peremptory exception, all but some men of fashion and pleasure, humbly moved, when Dorcon was going to kiss the book, that he might be required to declare upon honour whether he believed either God or gospel. Dorcon, rather than hazard his reputation as a man of honour and free-thinker, openly avowed that he believed in neither. Upon which the court declared him unfit to serve on a jury. By the same reason, so many were set aside as made it necessary to put off the trial.

We are very easy, replied *Alciphron*, about being trusted to serve on juries, if we can be admitted to serve in lucrative employments.

Cri. But what if the government should enjoin that every one, before he was sworn into office, should make the same declaration which Dorcon was required to make?

Alc. God forbid! I hope there is no such design on foot.

Cri. Whatever designs may be on foot, thus much is certain: the Christian reformed religion is a principal part and corner-stone of our free constitution; and I verily think, the only thing that makes us deserving of freedom, or capable of enjoying it. Freedom is either a blessing or a curse as men use it. And to me it seems that if our religion were once destroyed from among us, and

those notions which pass for prejudices of a Christian education erased from the minds of Britons, the best thing that could befal us would be the loss of our freedom. Surely a people wherein there is such restless ambition, such high spirits, such animosity of faction, so great interests, in contest such unbounded licence of speech and press, amidst so much wealth and luxury, nothing but those *veteres aviæ*, which you pretend to extirpate, could have hitherto kept from ruin.

36. Under the Christian religion this nation hath been greatly improved. From a sort of savages, we have grown civil, polite, and learned. We have made a decent and noble figure both at home and abroad. And, as our religion decreaseth, I am afraid we shall be found to have declined. Why then should we persist in the dangerous experiment?

Alc. One would think, Crito, you had forgot the many calamities occasioned by churchmen and religion.

Cri. And one would think you had forgot what was answered this very day to that objection. But, not to repeat eternally the same things, I should observe, in the first place, that, if we reflect on the past state of Christendom, and of our country in particular, with our feuds and factions subsisting while we were all of the same religion, for instance, that of the White and Red Roses, so violent and bloody and of such long continuance; we can have no assurance that those ill humours, which have since shewn themselves under the mask of religion, would not have broke out with some other pretext, if this had been wanting. I observe, in the second place, that it will not follow, from any observations you can make on our history, that the evils, accidentally occasioned by religion, bear any proportion either to the good effects it hath really produced, or the evils it hath prevented. Lastly, I observe that the best things may, by accident, be the occasion of evil; which accidental effect is not, to speak properly and truly, produced by the good thing itself, but by some evil thing, which, being neither part, property, nor effect of it, happens to be joined with it. But I should be ashamed to insist and enlarge on so plain a point. Certainly whatever evils this nation might

have formerly sustained from superstition, no man of common sense will say the evils felt or apprehended at present are from that quarter. Priestcraft is not the reigning distemper at this day. And surely it will be owned that a wise man, who takes upon him to be vigilant for the public weal, should touch proper things at proper times, and not prescribe for a surfeit when the distemper is a consumption.

Alc. I think we have sufficiently discussed the subject of this day's conference. And now, let Lysicles take it as he will, I must, in regard to my own character, as a fair and impartial adversary, acknowledge there is something in what Crito hath said, upon the usefulness of the Christian religion. I will even own to you that some of our sect are for allowing it a toleration. I remember, at a meeting of several ingenious men, after much debate we came successively to diverse resolutions. The first was, that no religion ought to be tolerated in the state: but this on more mature thought was judged impracticable. The second was, that all religion should be tolerated, but none countenanced except atheism: but it was apprehended that this might breed contentions among the lower sort of people. We came therefore to conclude, in the third place, that some religion or other should be established for the use of the vulgar. And, after a long dispute what this religion should be, Lysis, a brisk young man, perceiving no signs of agreement, proposed that the present religion might be tolerated, till a better was found. But, allowing it to be *expedient*, I can never think it *true*, so long as there lie unanswerable objections against it; which, if you please, I shall take the liberty to propose at our next meeting.

To which we all agreed.

THE SIXTH DIALOGUE[1]

The balances of deceit are in his hand.—HOSEA xii. 7.

Τὸ ἐξαπατᾶσθαι αὐτὸν ὑφ' αὑτοῦ πάντων χαλεπώτατον.—PLATO.

1. Points agreed. 2. Sundry pretences to revelation. 3. Uncertainty of tradition. 4. Object and ground of faith. 5. Some books disputed, others evidently spurious. 6. Style and composition of Holy Scripture. 7. Difficulties occurring therein. 8. Obscurity not always a defect. 9. Inspiration neither impossible nor absurd. 10. Objections from the form and matter of Divine revelation considered. 11. Infidelity an effect of narrowness and prejudice. 12. Articles of Christian faith not unreasonable. 13. Guilt the natural parent of fear. 14. Things unknown reduced to the standard of what men know. 15. Prejudices against the incarnation of the Son of God. 16. Ignorance of the Divine economy a source of difficulties. 17. Wisdom of God foolishness to man. 18. Reason no blind guide. 19. Usefulness of Divine revelation. 20. Prophecies, whence obscure. 21. Eastern accounts of time older than the Mosaic. 22. The humour of Egyptians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and other nations, extending their

[1] This Dialogue discusses evidence for the truth of Christianity regarded as the consummation of the revelation of God to man that is initiated in visible nature. The argument thus passes from the utility of Christianity to its divinity. That the reason for receiving this deeper

antiquity beyond truth, accounted for. 23. Reasons confirming the Mosaic account. 24. Profane historians inconsistent. 25. Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian. 26. The testimony of Josephus considered. 27. Attestation of Jews and Gentiles to Christianity. 28. Forgeries and heresies. 29. Judgment and attention to minute philosophers. 30. Faith and miracles. 31. Probable arguments, a sufficient ground of faith. 32. The Christian religion able to stand the test of rational inquiry.

1. THE following day being Sunday, our philosophers lay long in bed, while the rest of us went to church in the neighbouring town, where we dined at Euphranor's, and after evening service returned to the two philosophers, whom we found in the library. They told us that, if there was a God, He was present everywhere as well as at church; and that if we had been serving Him one way, they did not neglect to do as much another; inasmuch as a free exercise of reason must be allowed the most acceptable service and worship that a rational creature can offer to its Creator. However, said *Alciphron*, if you, gentlemen, can but solve the difficulties which I shall propose to-morrow morning, I promise to go to church next Sunday.

After some general conversation of this kind, we sat down to a light supper, and the next morning assembled at the same place as the day before; where being all seated, I observed, that the foregoing week our conferences had been carried on for a longer time and with less interruption than I had ever known, or well could be, in town; where men's hours are so broken by visits, business, and amusements, that whoever is content to form his notions from conversation only must needs have them very shattered and imperfect.

And what have we got, replied *Alciphron*, by all these continued conferences? For my part, I think myself just where I was with respect to the main point that divides us—the truth of the Christian religion.

and more practical revelation of God is fundamentally moral or probable, and that its acceptance, like our acceptance of natural science, is at last a venture of faith, is acknowledged (by implication) at the close of the discussion.

The progress of historical criticism and physical research, with the consequent revolution in recent conceptions of history and nature has made this Dialogue an anachronism.

I answered, that so many points had been examined, discussed, and agreed, between him and his adversaries, that I hoped to see them come to an entire agreement in the end. For, in the first place, said I, the principles and opinions of those who are called free-thinkers, or minute philosophers, have been pretty clearly explained [1]. It hath been also agreed, That vice is not of that benefit to the nation which some men imagine; that virtue is highly useful to mankind [2]: but that the beauty of virtue is not alone sufficient to engage them in the practice of it [3]; that therefore the belief of a God and Providence ought to be encouraged in the state, and tolerated in good company, as a useful notion [4]. Further, it hath been proved that there is a God [5]: that it is reasonable to worship Him: and that the worship, faith, and principles prescribed by the Christian religion have a useful tendency [6].

Admit, replied *Alciphron*, addressing himself to Crito, all that Dion saith to be true: yet this doth not hinder my being just where I was, with respect to the main point. Since there is nothing in all this that proves the *truth* of the Christian religion: though each of those particulars enumerated may, perhaps, prejudice in its favour. I am, therefore, to suspect myself at present for a prejudiced person; prejudiced, I say, in favour of Christianity. This, as I am a lover of truth, puts me upon my guard against deception. I must, therefore, look sharp, and well consider every step I take.

2. *Cri.* You may remember, Alciphron, you proposed, for the subject of our present conference—the consideration of certain difficulties and objections which you had to offer against the Christian religion. We are now ready to hear and consider whatever you shall think fit to produce of that kind. Atheism, and a wrong notion of Christianity, as of something hurtful to mankind, are great prejudices, the removal of which may dispose a man to argue with candour, and submit to reasonable proof: but the removing prejudices against an opinion is not to be reckoned prejudicing in its favour. It may be hoped,

[1] Dial. I. [2] Dial. II. [3] Dial. III.
[4] Dial. IV. [5] Dial. V.

therefore, that you will be able to do justice to your cause, without being fond of it.

Alc. O Crito! that man may thank his stars to whom nature hath given a sublime soul, who can raise himself above popular opinions, and, looking down on the herd of mankind, behold them scattered over the surface of the whole earth, divided and subdivided into numberless nations and tribes, differing in notions and tenets, as in language, manners, and dress. The man who takes a general view of the world and its inhabitants from this lofty stand, above the reach of prejudice, seems to breathe a purer air, and to see by a clearer light: but how to impart this clear and extensive view to those who are wandering beneath in the narrow dark paths of error, this indeed is a hard task. Yet, hard as it is, I shall try if by any means

Clara tuæ possim præpandere lumina menti.—LUCRET.

Know then that all the various casts or sects of the sons of men have each their faith, and their religious system, germinating and sprouting forth from that common grain of Enthusiasm which is an original ingredient in the composition of human nature. They each tell of intercourse with the invisible world, revelations from heaven, divine oracles, and the like. All which pretensions, when I regard with an impartial eye, it is impossible I should assent to all, when I find within myself something that withholds me from assenting to any of them. For, although I may be willing to follow, so far as common sense and the light of nature lead; yet the same reason that bids me yield to rational proof forbids me to admit opinions without proof. This holds in general against all revelations whatsoever.—And be this my first objection against the Christian in particular.

Cri. As this objection supposes there is no proof or reason for believing the Christian revelation, if good reason can be assigned for such belief, it comes to nothing. Now I presume you will grant the authority of the reporter is a true and proper reason for believing reports: and the better this authority, the juster claim it hath to our assent: but the authority of God is on all accounts the

best: whatever therefore comes from God, it is most reasonable to believe.

3. *Alc.* This I grant; but then it must be proved to come from God.

Cri. And are not miracles, and the accomplishments of prophecies, joined with the excellency of its doctrine, a sufficient proof that the Christian religion came from God?

Alc. Miracles, indeed, would prove something[1]. But what proof have we of these miracles?

Cri. Proof of the same kind that we have or can have of any facts done a great way off, and a long time ago. We have authentic accounts transmitted down to us from eye-witnesses, whom we cannot conceive tempted to impose upon us by any human motive whatsoever; inasmuch as they acted therein contrary to their interests, their prejudices, and the very principles in which they had been nursed and educated. These accounts were confirmed by the unparalleled subversion of the city of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation; which is a standing testimony to the truth of the gospel, particularly of the predictions of our blessed Saviour. These accounts, within less than a century, were spread throughout the world, and believed by great numbers of people. These same accounts were committed to writing, translated into several languages, and handed down with the same respect and consent of Christians in the most distant churches.

Do you not see, said *Alciphron*, staring full at Crito, that all this hangs by *tradition*? And tradition, take my word for it, gives but a weak hold: it is a chain, whereof the first links may be stronger than steel, and yet the last weak as wax, and as brittle as glass. Imagine a picture copied successively by a hundred painters, one from another; how like must the last copy be to the original! How lively and distinct will an image be, after a hundred reflexions between two parallel mirrors! Thus

[1] Alciphron does not raise the question of the possibility of physical miracles; nor the rationale of a miraculous proof that God is speaking to man in Christ, as distinguished from His language of Vision, signalised in the Fourth Dialogue.

like and thus lively do I think a faint vanishing tradition, at the end of sixteen or seventeen hundred years. Some men have a false heart, others a wrong head; and, where both are true, the memory may be treacherous. Hence there is still something added, something omitted, and something varied from the truth: and the sum of many such additions, deductions, and alterations, accumulated for several ages, do, at the foot of the account, make quite another thing.

Cri. Ancient facts we may know by tradition, oral or written: and this latter we may divide into two kinds, private and public, as writings are kept in the hands of particular men, or recorded in public archives. Now, all these three sorts of tradition, for aught I can see, concur to attest the genuine antiquity of the gospels. And they are strengthened by collateral evidence from rites instituted, festivals observed, and monuments erected by ancient Christians, such as churches, baptisteries, and sepulchres. Now, allowing your objection holds against oral tradition, singly taken, yet I can think it no such difficult thing to transcribe faithfully. And things once committed to writing are secure from slips of memory, and may with common care be preserved entire so long as the manuscript lasts: and this experience shews may be above two thousand years. The Alexandrine manuscript[1] is allowed to be above twelve hundred years old; and it is highly probable there were then extant copies four hundred years old. A tradition, therefore, of above sixteen hundred years old need have only two or three links in its chain. And these links, notwithstanding that great length of time, may be very sound and entire. Since no reasonable man will deny, that an ancient manuscript may be of much the same credit now as when it was first written. We have it on good authority, and it seems probable, that the primitive Christians were careful to transcribe copies of the gospels and epistles for their private use; and that other copies were preserved as public records, in the several churches throughout the world; and that portions thereof were constantly read

[1] The latter part of the sixth century is the probable date of the Alexandrian Codex, that celebrated MS. of Holy Scripture in Greek, now in the British Museum.

in their assemblies. Can more be said to prove the writings of classic authors, or ancient records of any kind authentic?

Alciphron, addressing his discourse to Euphranor, said —It is one thing to silence an adversary, and another to convince him. What do you think, Euphranor?

Euph. Doubtless, it is.

Alc. But what I want is to be convinced.

Euph. That point is not so clear.

Alc. But if a man had ever so much mind, he cannot be convinced by probable arguments against demonstration.

Euph. I grant he cannot.

4. *Alc.* Now it is as evident as demonstration can make it, that no Divine faith can possibly be built upon tradition[1]. Suppose an honest and credulous countryman catechised and lectured every Sunday by his parish priest: it is plain he believes in the parson, and not in God. He knows nothing of revelations, and doctrines, and miracles but what the priest tells him. This he believes, and this faith is purely human. If you say he has the Liturgy and the Bible for the foundation of his faith, the difficulty still recurs. For, as to the Liturgy, he pins his faith upon the civil magistrate, as well as the ecclesiastic: neither of which can pretend Divine inspiration. Then for the Bible, he takes both that and his Prayer-book on trust from the printer, who, he believes, made true editions from true copies. You see then faith, but what faith? Faith in the priest, in the magistrate, in the printer, editor, transcriber; none of which can with any pretence be called Divine. I had the hint from Cratylus[2]; it is a shaft out of his quiver, and believe me, a keen one.

Euph. Let me take and make trial of this same shaft in my hands. Suppose then your countryman hears a magistrate declare the law from the bench, or suppose he

[1] Cf. Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation,* ch. ix, xiii. Tindal urges the inadequacy of history and tradition, as a fallible medium for a revelation of God, and claims superiority in this respect for natural religion, which is independent of history.

[2] See Shaftesbury's *Characteristics,* vol. I. pp. 146–7; III. pp. 319–34. Cratylus represents Shaftesbury.

reads it in a statute-book. What think you, is the printer or the justice the true and proper object of his faith and submission? Or do you acknowledge a higher authority whereon to found those loyal acts, and in which they do really terminate? Again, suppose you read a passage in Tacitus that you believe true; would you say you assented to it on the authority of the printer or transcriber rather than the historian?

Alc. Perhaps I would, and perhaps I would not. I do not think myself obliged to answer these points. What is this but transferring the question from one subject to another? That which we considered was neither law nor profane history, but religious tradition, and Divine faith. I see plainly what you aim at, but shall never take for an answer to one difficulty, the starting of another.

Cri. O Alciphron! there is no taking hold of you, who expect that others should (as you were pleased to express[1]) hold fair and stand firm, while you plucked out their prejudices. How shall he argue with you but from your concessions, and how can he know what you grant except you will be pleased to tell him?

Euph. But, to save you the trouble, for once I will suppose an answer. My question admits but of two answers: take your choice. From the one it will follow that, by a parity of reason, we can easily conceive how a man may have Divine faith, though *he* never felt inspiration or saw a miracle: inasmuch as it is equally possible for the mind, through whatever conduit, oral or scriptural, Divine revelation be derived, to carry its thoughts and submission up to the source, and terminate its faith not in human but Divine authority; not in the instrument or vessel of conveyance, but in the great origin itself, as its proper and true object. From the other answer it will follow that you introduce a general scepticism into human knowledge, and break down the hinges on which civil government, and all the affairs of the world, turn and depend: in a word, that you would destroy human faith to get rid of Divine[2]. And how this agrees with your

[1] Dial. I. sect. 5.

[2] If human testimony is absolutely untrustworthy human society must dissolve. And if the concrete universe in which we find ourselves is *fundamentally undivine*, it is wholly unfit to be reasoned about, as we have then no

professing that you want to be convinced I leave you to consider.

5. *Alc.* I should in earnest be glad to be convinced one way or other, and come to some conclusion. But I have so many objections in store you are not to count much upon getting over one. Depend on it you shall find me behave like a gentleman and a lover of truth. I will propose my objections briefly and plainly, and accept of reasonable answers as fast as you can give them. Come, Euphranor, make the most of your tradition; you can never make that a constant and universal one, which is acknowledged to have been unknown, or at best disputed, in the Church for several ages:—and this is the case of the canon of the New Testament. For, though we have now a canon, as they call it, settled, yet every one must see and own that tradition cannot grow stronger by age; and that what was uncertain in the primitive times cannot be undoubted in the subsequent. What say you to this, Euphranor?

Euph. I should be glad to conceive your meaning clearly before I return an answer. It seems to me this objection of yours supposeth that where a tradition hath been constant and undisputed, such tradition may be admitted as a proof; but that where the tradition is defective, the proof must be so too. Is this your meaning?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Consequently the Gospels, and Epistles of St. Paul, which were universally received in the beginning, and never since doubted of by the Church, must, notwithstanding this objection, be in reason admitted for genuine. And, if these books contain, as they really do, all those points that come into controversy between you and me, what need I dispute with you about the authority of some other books of the New Testament, which came later to be generally known and received in the Church? If a man assent to the undisputed books, he is no longer an

guarantee for its orderliness, or for reliance on our so-called faculties of knowledge. The eternal omnipresence of omnipotent goodness (according to our highest conception of goodness) in the tacit presupposition of all trustworthy intercourse, through experience, with the universe of things and persons.

infidel; though he should not hold the Revelations, or the Epistle of St. James or Jude, or the latter of St. Peter, or the two last of St. John to be canonical. The additional authority of these portions of Holy Scripture may have its weight in particular controversies between Christians, but can add nothing to arguments against an infidel as such. Wherefore, though I believe good reasons may be assigned for receiving these books, yet these reasons seem now beside our purpose. When you are a Christian it will be then time enough to argue this point. And you will be the nearer being so, if the way be shortened by omitting it for the present.

Alc. Not so near neither as you perhaps imagine: for, notwithstanding all the fair and plausible things you may say about tradition, when I consider the spirit of forgery which reigned in the primitive times, and reflect on the several Gospels, Acts, and Epistles, attributed to the apostles, which yet are acknowledged to be spurious, I confess I cannot help suspecting the whole.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, do you suspect all Plato's writings for spurious, because the *Dialogue upon Death*, for instance, is allowed to be so? Or will you admit none of Tully's writings to be genuine, because Sigonius imposed a book of his own writing for Tully's treatise *De Consolatione*, and the imposture passed for some time on the world [1]?

Alc. Suppose I admit for the works of Tully and Plato those that commonly pass for such. What then?

Euph. Why then I would fain know whether it be equal and impartial in a free-thinker, to measure the credibility of profane and sacred books by a different rule. Let us know upon what foot we Christians are to argue with minute philosophers; whether we may be allowed the benefit of common maxims in logic and criticism? If we may, be pleased to assign a reason why supposititious writings, which in the style and manner and matter bear

[1] Sigonius (Sigonio or Sigone), a famous Italian scholar and antiquary in the sixteenth century, who passed off as genuine a skilful imitation of Cicero, in the form of a treatise *De Consolatione*, of which he was himself the author. It was accepted at the time by many of the learned, and Tiraboschi was undeceived only by finding letters in which Sigonius allows the forgery.

visible marks of imposture, and have accordingly been rejected by the Church, can be made an argument against those which have been universally received, and handed down by an unanimous constant tradition. [[1] I know nothing truly valuable that hath not been counterfeited; therefore this argument is universal: but that which concludes against all things is to be admitted against none.] There have been in all ages, and in all great societies of men many capricious, vain, or wicked impostors, who for different ends have abused the world by spurious writings, and created work for critics both in profane and sacred learning. And it would seem as silly to reject the true writings of profane authors for the sake of the spurious, as it would seem unreasonable to suppose, that among the heretics and several sects of Christians there should be none capable of the like imposture.

[[2] *Alc.* I see no means for judging: it is all dark and doubtful; mere guess-work, at so great distance of time.

Cri. But if I know that a number of fit persons, met together in Council, did examine and distinguish authentic writings from spurious, relating to a point of the highest concern, in an age near the date of those writings; though I at the distance of many more centuries had no other proof, yet their decision may be of weight to determine my judgment. Since it is probable they might have had several proofs and reasons for what they did, and not at all improbable that those reasons might be lost in so long a tract of time [3].]

6. *Alc.* But, be the tradition ever so well attested, and the books ever so genuine, yet I cannot suppose them wrote by persons divinely inspired so long as I see in them certain characters inconsistent with such a supposition. Surely the purest language, the most perfect style, the exactest method, and in a word all the excellences of good writing, might be expected in a piece composed or dictated by the Spirit of God. But books wherein we

[1] Introduced in the third edition.

[2] Introduced in the second edition.

[3] [Vide Can. LX. Concil. Laodicen.]—AUTHOR.

find the reverse of all this, it were impious not to reject, but to attribute to the Divinity[1].

Euph. Say, Alciphron, are the lakes, the rivers, or the ocean, bounded by straight lines? Are the hills and mountains exact cones or pyramids? Or the stars cast into regular figures?

Alc. They are not.

Euph. But in the works of insects we may observe figures as exact as if they were drawn by the rule and compass.

Alc. We may.

Euph. Should it not seem, therefore, that a regular exactness, or scrupulous attention to what men call the rules of art, is not observed in the great productions of the Author of nature?

Alc. It should.

Euph. And when a great prince declareth his will in laws and edicts to his subjects, is he careful about a pure style or elegant composition? Does he not leave his secretaries and clerks to express his sense in their own words? Is not the phrase on such occasions thought proper if it conveys as much as was intended? And would not the divine strain of certain modern critics be judged affected, and improper for such uses?

Alc. It must be owned, laws, and edicts, and grants, for solecism and tautology, are very offensive to the harmonious ears of a fine writer.

Euph. Why then should we expect in the Oracles of God an exactness that would be misbecoming and beneath the dignity of an earthly monarch, and which bears no proportion or resemblance to the magnificent works of the creation?

Alc. But, granting that a nice regard to particles and critical rules is a thing too little and mean to be expected in Divine revelations; and that there is more force, and spirit, and true greatness in a negligent, unequal style, than in the well-turned periods of a polite writer;—yet what is all this to the bald and flat compositions of those you call the Divine penmen? I can never be persuaded the Supreme Being would pick out the poorest and meanest scribblers for his secretaries.

[1] See Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, vol. III. pp. 229–35.

Euph. O Alciphron! if I durst follow my own judgment, I should be apt to think there are noble beauties in the style of the Holy Scripture: in the narrative parts a strain so simple and unaffected: in the devotional and prophetic so animated and sublime: and in the doctrinal parts such an air of dignity and authority as seems to speak their original Divine. But I shall not enter into a dispute about taste; much less set up my judgment on so nice a point against that of the wits, and men of genius, with which your sect abounds. And I have no temptation to it, inasmuch as it seems to me the Oracles of God are not the less so for being delivered in a plain dress, rather than in 'the enticing words of man's wisdom.'

Alc. This may perhaps be an apology for some simplicity and negligence in writing.

7. But what apology can be made for nonsense, crude nonsense?[1] Of which I could easily assign many instances, having once in my life read the Scripture through with that very view. Look here, said he, opening a Bible, in the forty-ninth Psalm, the author begins magnificently, calling upon all the inhabitants of the earth to give ear, and assuring them his mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of his heart shall be of understanding:

Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu?

He hath no sooner done with his preface but he puts this senseless question, 'Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil; when the wickedness of my heels shall compass me about?' The iniquity of my heels! What nonsense after such a solemn introduction!

Euph. For my own part, I have naturally weak eyes, and know there are many things that I cannot see, which are nevertheless distinctly seen by others. I do not therefore conclude a thing to be absolutely invisible, because it is so to me. And, since it is possible it may be with my understanding as it is with my eyes, I dare not pronounce a thing to be nonsense, because I do not understand it. Of this passage many interpretations are given. The word rendered *heels* may signify fraud or supplantation: by some it is translated 'past wickedness,' the heel

[1] So Tindal.

'being the hinder part of the foot; by others 'iniquity in the end of my days,' the heel being one extremity of the body; by some 'the iniquity of my enemies that may supplant me'; by others 'my own faults or iniquities which I have passed over as light matters, and trampled under my feet.' Some render it 'the iniquity of my ways'; others, 'my transgressions, which are like slips and slidings of the heel.' And after all, might not this expression, so harsh and odd to English ears, have been very natural and obvious in the Hebrew tongue, which, as every other language, had its idioms? the force and propriety whereof may as easily be conceived lost in a long tract of time, as the signification of some Hebrew words which are not now intelligible, though nobody doubts but they had once a meaning as well as the other words of that language. Granting, therefore, that certain passages in the Holy Scripture may not be understood, it will not thence follow that its penman wrote nonsense; for I conceive nonsense to be one thing, and unintelligible another.

Cri. An English gentleman of my acquaintance one day entertaining some foreigners at his house sent a servant to know the occasion of a sudden tumult in the yard, who brought him word, 'the horses were fallen together by the ears.' His guests inquiring what the matter was, he translates it literally, *Les chevaux sont tombez ensemble par les oreilles*: which made them stare; what expressed a very plain sense in the original English being incomprehensible when rendered word for word into French. And I remember to have heard a man excuse the bulls of his countrymen, by supposing them so many literal translations.

Euph. But, not to grow tedious, I refer to the critics and commentators, where you will find the use of this remark, which, clearing up several obscure passages you take for nonsense, may possibly incline you to suspect your own judgment of the rest. In this very psalm you have pitched on, the good sense and moral contained in what follows, should, methinks, make a candid reader judge favourably of the original sense of the author, in that part which he could not understand. Say, Alciphron, in reading the classics, do you forthwith conclude every passage to be nonsense that you cannot make sense of?

Alc. By no means; difficulties must be supposed to rise from different idioms, old customs, hints, and allusions, clear in one time or place, and obscure in another.

Euph. And why will you not judge of Scripture by the same rule? These sources of obscurity you mention are all common both to sacred and profane writings; and there is no doubt but an exacter knowledge in language and circumstances would in both cause difficulties to vanish like shades before the light of the sun. Jeremiah, to describe a furious invader, saith, 'Behold he shall come up as a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong'[1]. One would be apt to think this passage odd and improper, and that it had been more reasonable to have said, 'a lion from the mountain or the desert.' But travellers, as an ingenious man observes, who have seen the river Jordan bounded by low lands with many reeds or thickets affording shelter to wild beasts (which being suddenly dislodged by a rapid overflowing of the river rush into the upland country), perceive the force and propriety of the comparison; and that the difficulty proceeds, not from nonsense in the writer, but from ignorance in the reader[2].

[1] Jer. xlix. 19.

[2] The following sentences added here in the first and second editions, were withdrawn in the third: —'It is needless to amass together instances which may be found in every commentator. I only beg leave to observe, that sometimes men looking higher or deeper than they need, for a profound or remote sense, overlook the natural obvious sense, lying, if I may so say, at their feet, and so make difficulties instead of finding them. This seems to be the case of that celebrated passage, which hath created so much work, in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians*: "What shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" I remember to have heard this text explained by Laches, the vicar of our parish, to my neighbour Lycon, who was much perplexed about its meaning. If it had been translated, as it might very justly "baptized for the sake of the dead," I do not see, said Laches, why people should be puzzled about the sense of this passage; for, tell me, I beseech you, for whose sake do you think those Christians were baptized? For whose sake, answered Lycon, but their own? How do you mean? for their own sake in this life, or the next? Doubtless, in the next; for it was plain they could get nothing by it in this. They were then, replied Laches, baptized not for the sake of themselves while living, but for the sake of themselves when dead; not for the

* 1 Corinth. xv. 29.

Alc. Here and there a difficult passage may be cleared: but there are many which no art or wit of man can account for. What say you to those discoveries, made by some of our learned writers, of false citations from the Old Testament found in the Gospel?

Euph. That some few passages are cited by the writers of the New Testament out of the Old, and by the Fathers out of the New, which are not in so many words to be found in them, is no new discovery of minute philosophers, but was known and observed long before by Christian writers; who have made no scruple to grant that some things might have been inserted by careless or mistaken transcribers into the text, from the margin, others left out, and others altered; whence so many various readings. But these are things of small moment, and which all other ancient authors have been subject to; and upon which no point of doctrine depends which may not be proved without them. Nay further, if it be any advantage to your cause, it hath been observed, that the eighteenth Psalm, as recited in the twenty-second chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, varies in about forty places, if you regard every little verbal or literal difference; and that a critic may now and then discover small variations is what nobody can deny. But, to make the most of these concessions, what can you infer from them more than that the design of the Holy Scripture was not to make us exactly knowing in circumstantials? and that the Spirit did not dictate every particle and syllable, or preserve them from every minute alteration by miracle? which to believe, would look like Rabbinical superstition.

Alc. But what marks of Divinity can possibly be in writings which do not reach the exactness even of human art?

Euph. I never thought nor expected that the Holy

living, but the dead? I grant it. Baptism, therefore, must have been to them a fruitless thing, if the dead rise not at all? It must. Whence Laches inferred that St. Paul's argument was clear and pertinent for the resurrection: and Lycon allowed it to be *argumentum ad hominem* to those who had sought baptism. There is then, concluded Laches, no necessity for supposing that living men were in those days baptized instead of those who died without baptism, or of running into any other odd suppositions or strained and far-fetched interpretation to make sense of this passage.'

Scripture should shew itself Divine, by a circumstantial accuracy of narration, by exactness of method, by strictly observing the rules of rhetoric, grammar, and criticism, in harmonious periods, in elegant and choice expressions, or in technical definitions and partitions. These things would look too like a human composition. Methinks there is in that simple, unaffected, artless, unequal, bold, figurative style of the Holy Scripture, a character singularly great and majestic, and that looks more like Divine inspiration than any other composition that I know. But, as I said before, I shall not dispute a point of criticism with the gentlemen of your sect, who, it seems, are the modern standard for wit and taste.

Alc. Well, I shall not insist on small slips, or the inaccuracy of citing or transcribing. And I freely own, that repetitions, want of method, or want of exactness in circumstances, are not the things that chiefly stick with me; no more than the plain patriarchal manners, or the peculiar usages and customs of the Jews and first Christians, so different from ours; and that to reject the Scripture on such accounts would be to act like those French wits who censure Homer because they do not find in him the style, notions, and manners of their own age and country. Was there nothing else to divide us, I should make no great difficulty of owning that a popular incorrect style might answer the general ends of revelation, as well perhaps as a more critical and exact one. But the obscurity still sticks with me. Methinks if the supreme Being had spoke to man, He would have spoke clearly to him, and that the Word of God should not need a comment.

8. *Euph.* You seem, Alciphron, to think obscurity a defect; but if it should prove to be no defect, there would then be no force in this objection.

Alc. I grant there would not.

Euph. Pray tell me, are not speech and style instrumental to convey thoughts and notions, to beget knowledge, opinion, and assent?

Alc. This is true.

Euph. And is not the perfection of an instrument to be measured by the use to which it is subservient?

Alc. It is.

Euph. What therefore is a defect in one instrument may be none in another. For instance, edged tools are in general designed to cut; but, the uses of an axe and a razor being different, it is no defect in an axe that it hath not the keen edge of a razor; nor in a razor that it hath not the weight or strength of an axe.

Alc. I acknowledge this to be true.

Euph. And may we not say in general, that every instrument is perfect which answers the purpose or intention of him who useth it?

Alc. We may.

Euph. Hence it seems to follow, that no man's speech is defective in point of clearness, though it should not be intelligible to all men, if it be sufficiently so to those who he intended should understand it; or though it should not in all parts be equally clear, or convey a perfect knowledge, where he intended only an imperfect hint.

Alc. It seems so.

Euph. Ought we not therefore to know the intention of the speaker, to be able to know whether his style be obscure through defect or design?

Alc. We ought.

Euph. But is it possible for one man to know all the ends and purposes of God's revelations?

Alc. It is not.

Euph. How then can you tell but the obscurity of some parts of Scripture may well consist with the purpose which you know not, and consequently be no argument against its coming from God? The books of Holy Scripture were written in ancient languages, at distant times, on sundry occasions, and very different subjects. Is it not, therefore, reasonable to imagine that some parts or passages might have been clearly enough understood by those for whose proper use they were principally designed, and yet seem obscure to us, who speak another language, and live in other times? Is it at all absurd or unsuitable to the notion we have of God or man, to suppose that God may reveal, and yet reveal with a reserve upon certain remote and sublime subjects, content to give us hints and glimpses, rather than views? May we not also suppose, from the reason of things and the analogy of nature, that

some points, which might otherwise have been more clearly explained, were left obscure merely to encourage our diligence and modesty? Two virtues, which, if it might not seem disrespectful to such great men, I would recommend to the minute philosophers[1].

Lysicles replied, This indeed is excellent! You expect that men of sense and spirit should in great humility put out their eyes, and blindly swallow all the absurdities and nonsense that shall be offered to them for Divine revelation.

Euph. On the contrary, I would have them open their eyes, look sharply, and try the spirit, whether it is of God; and not supinely and ignorantly condemn in the gross all religions together, piety with superstition, truth for the sake of error, matter of fact for the sake of fiction: a conduct which at first sight would seem absurd in history, physic, or any other branch of human inquiry. But, to compare the Christian system, or Holy Scriptures, with other pretences to Divine revelation; to consider impartially the doctrines, precepts, and events therein contained; weigh them in the balance with any other religious, natural, moral, or historical accounts; and diligently to examine all those proofs, internal and external, that for so many ages have been able to influence and persuade so many wise, learned, and inquisitive men—perhaps they might find in it certain peculiar characters which sufficiently distinguish it from all other religions and pretended revelations, whereon to ground a reasonable faith. In which case, I leave them to consider whether it would be right to reject with peremptory scorn a revelation so distinguished and attested, upon account of obscurity in some parts of it? and whether it would seem beneath men of their sense and spirit to acknowledge that, for aught they know, a light inadequate to things may yet be adequate to the purpose of Providence? and whether it might be unbecoming their sagacity and critical skill to own, that literal translations from books in an ancient oriental tongue, wherein there are so many peculiarities, as to the

[1] Some people are apt to presuppose that God must be revealed, if at all, through a perfectly lucid and in all respects verbal infallible medium, rather than in a manner adapted to encourage diligent inquiry, and to keep in constant exercise the moral venture of faith.

manner of writing, the figures of speech, and structure of the phrase, so remote from all our modern idioms, and in which we have no other coeval writings extant, might well be obscure in many places, especially such as treat of subjects sublime and difficult in their own nature, or allude to things, customs, or events very distant from our knowledge? And lastly, whether it might not become their character, as impartial and unprejudiced men, to consider the Bible in the same light they would profane authors? They are apt to make great allowance for transpositions, omissions, and literal errors of transcribers in other ancient books; and very great for the difference of style and manner, especially in Eastern writings, such as the remains of Zoroaster and Confucius, and why not in the Prophets? In reading Horace or Persius, to make out the sense, they will be at the pains to discover a hidden drama, and why not in Solomon or St. Paul? I hear there are certain ingenious men who despise King David's poetry, and yet profess to admire Homer and Pindar. If there be no prejudice or affectation in this, let them but make a literal version from those authors into English prose, and they will then be better able to judge of the Psalms.

Alc. You may discourse and expatiate; but, notwithstanding all you have said or shall say, it is a clear point, that a revelation which doth not reveal can be no better than a contradiction in terms.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, do you not acknowledge the light of the sun to be the most glorious production of Providence in this natural world?

Alc. Suppose I do.

Euph. This light, nevertheless, which you cannot deny to be of God's making, shines only on the surface of things, shines not at all in the night, shines imperfectly in the twilight, is often interrupted, refracted, and obscured, represents distant things and small things dubiously, imperfectly, or not at all. Is this true or no?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Should it not follow, therefore, that to expect in this world a light from God, without any mixture of shade or mystery, would be departing from the rule and analogy of the creation? and that, consequently, it is no argument

the light of revelation is not Divine, because it may not be so clear and full as you expect [; [1] or because it may not equally shine at all times, or in all places].

Alc. As I profess myself candid and indifferent throughout this debate, I must needs own you say some plausible things, as a man of argument will never fail to do in vindication of his prejudices.

9. But, to deal plainly, I must tell you, once for all, that you may question and answer, illustrate, and enlarge for ever, without being able to convince me that the Christian Religion is of divine revelation. I have said several things, and have many more to say, which, believe me, have weight not only with myself, but with many great men my very good friends, and will have weight whatever Euphranor can say to the contrary.

Euph. O Alciphron! I envy you the happiness of such acquaintance. But, as my lot, fallen in this remote corner, deprives me of that advantage, I am obliged to make the most of this opportunity which you and Lysicles have put into my hands. I consider you as two able chirurgeons, and you were pleased to consider me as a patient, whose cure you have generously undertaken. Now, a patient must have full liberty to explain his case, and tell all his symptoms, the concealing or palliating of which might prevent a perfect cure. You will be pleased therefore to understand me, not as objecting to, or arguing against, either your skill or medicines, but only as setting forth my own case, and the effects they have upon me. Say, Alciphron, did you not give me to understand that you would extirpate my prejudices?

Alc. It is true: a good physician eradicates every fibre of the disease. Come, you shall have a patient hearing.

Euph. Pray, was it not the opinion of Plato, that God inspired particular men, as organs or trumpets, to proclaim and sound forth his oracles to the world [2]? And was not the same opinion also embraced by others the greatest writers of antiquity?

Cri. Socrates seems to have thought that all true poets spoke by inspiration; and Tully, that there was no extra-

[1] Added in second edition.

[2] [Plato in Ione.]—AUTHOR.

ordinary genius without it. This hath made some of our affected free-thinkers attempt to pass themselves upon the world for enthusiasts.

Alc. What would you infer from all this?

Euph. I would infer that inspiration should seem nothing impossible or absurd, but rather agreeable to the light of reason and the notions of mankind. And this, I suppose, you will acknowledge, having made it an objection against a particular revelation, that there are so many pretences to it throughout the world.

Alc. O Euphranor! he who looks into the bottom of things, and resolves them into their first principles, is not easily amused with words. The word *inspiration* sounds indeed big, but let us, if you please, take an original view of the thing signified by it. To *inspire* is a word borrowed from the Latin, and, strictly taken, means no more than to breathe or blow in: nothing, therefore, can be inspired but what can be blown or breathed; and nothing can be so but wind or vapour, which indeed may fill or puff up men with fanatical and hypochondriacal ravings. This sort of inspiration I very readily admit.

Euph. What you say is subtle, and I know not what effect it might have upon me, if your profound discourse did not hinder its own operation.

Alc. How so?

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, do you discourse, or do you not? To me it seems that you discourse admirably.

Alc. Be that as it will, it is certain I discourse.

Euph. But, when I endeavour to look into the bottom of things, behold! a scruple riseth in my mind how this can be; for, to *discourse* is a word of Latin derivation, which originally signifies to run about; and a man cannot run about but he must change place, and move his legs; so long, therefore, as you sit on this bench, you cannot be said to discourse. Solve me this difficulty, and then perhaps I may be able to solve yours.

Alc. You are to know, that *discourse* is a word borrowed from sensible things, to express an invisible action of the mind, reasoning or inferring one thing from another; and, in this translated sense, we may be said to discourse though we sit still.

Euph. And may we not as well conceive that the term

inspiration might be borrowed from sensible things, to denote an action of God, in an extraordinary manner, influencing, exciting, and enlightening the mind of a prophet or an apostle? who, in this secondary, figurative, and translated sense, may truly be said to be inspired, though there should be nothing in the case of that wind or vapour implied in the original sense of the word? It seems to me that we may, by looking into our own minds, plainly perceive certain instincts, impulses, and tendencies, which, at proper periods and occasions, spring up unaccountably in the soul of man. We observe very visible signs of the same in all other animals. And, these things being ordinary and natural, what hinders but we may conceive it possible for the human mind, upon an extraordinary account, to be moved in an extraordinary manner, and its faculties stirred up and actuated by supernatural power? That there are, and have been, and are likely to be, wild visions and hypochondriacal ravings, nobody can deny; but, to infer from thence that there are no true inspirations would be too like concluding, that some men are not in their senses, because other men are fools. And, though I am no prophet, and consequently cannot pretend to a clear notion of this matter, yet I shall not therefore take upon me to deny but a true prophet or inspired person might have had a certain means of discerning between Divine inspiration and hypochondriacal fancy, as you can between sleeping and waking, till you have proved the contrary. You may meet in the book of Jeremiah with this passage—'The prophet that hath a dream let him tell a dream: and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces[1]?' You see here a distinction made between wheat and chaff, true and spurious, with the mighty force and power of the former. But I beg pardon for quoting Scripture to you. I make my appeal to the general sense of mankind, and the opinion of the wisest heathens, which seems sufficient to conclude Divine inspiration possible, if not probable, at least till you prove the contrary.

[1] [Jer. xxiii. 28, 29.]—Author.

10. *Alc.* The possibility of inspirations and revelations I do not think it necessary to deny. Make the best you can of this concession.

Euph. Now what is allowed possible we may suppose in fact.

Alc. We may.

Euph. Let us then suppose that God had been pleased to make a revelation to men; and that He inspired *some* as a means to instruct others. Having supposed this, can you deny that their inspired discourses and revelations might have been committed to writing, or that, being written, after a long tract of time they might become in several places obscure; that some of them might even originally have been less clear than others, or that they might suffer some alteration by frequent transcribing, as other writings are known to have done? Is it not even very probable that all these things would happen?

Alc. I grant it.

Euph. And, granting this, with what pretence can you reject the Holy Scriptures as not being Divine, upon the account of such signs or marks as you acknowledge would probably attend a Divine revelation transmitted down to us through so many ages?

Alc. But allowing all that in reason you can desire, and granting that this may account for some obscurity, may reconcile some small differences, or satisfy us how some difficulties might arise, by inserting, omitting, or changing, here and there a letter, a word, or perhaps a sentence; yet these are but small matters, in respect of the much more considerable and weighty objections I could produce against the confessed doctrines, or subject-matter of those writings. Let us see what is contained in these sacred books, and then judge whether it is probable or possible such revelations should ever have been made by God. Now, I defy the wit of man to contrive anything more extravagant than the accounts we there find of apparitions, devils, miracles, God manifest in the flesh, regeneration, grace, self-denial, resurrection of the dead, and such-like *ægri somnia:* things so odd, unaccountable, and remote from the apprehension of mankind, you may as soon wash a blackamore white as clear them of absurdity. No critical

skill can justify them, no tradition recommend them, I will not say for Divine revelations, but even for the inventions of men of sense.

Euph. I had always a great opinion of your sagacity, but now, Alciphron, I consider you as something more than man; else how should it be possible for you to know what, or how far, it may be proper for God to reveal? Methinks it may consist with all due deference to the greatest of human understandings, to suppose them ignorant of many things, which are not suited to their faculties, or lie out of their reach. Even the counsels of princes lie often beyond the ken of their subjects, who can only know so much as is revealed by those at the helm; and are often unqualified to judge of the usefulness and tendency even of that, till in due time the scheme unfolds, and is accounted for by succeeding events. That many points contained in Holy Scripture are remote from the common apprehensions of mankind cannot be denied. But I do not see that it follows from thence they are not of Divine revelation. On the contrary, should it not seem reasonable to suppose that a revelation from God should contain something different in kind, or more excellent in degree, than what lay open to the common sense of men, or could even be discovered by the most sagacious philosopher? Accounts of separate spirits, good or bad, prophecies, miracles, and such things, are undoubtedly strange; but I would fain see how you can prove them impossible or absurd.

Alc. Some things there are so evidently absurd that it would be almost as silly to disprove them as to believe them; and I take these to be of that class.

11. *Euph.* But is it not possible some men may shew as much prejudice and narrowness in rejecting all such accounts as others might easiness and credulity in admitting them? I never durst make my own observation or experience the rule and measure of things spiritual, supernatural, or relating to another world; because I should think it a very bad one even for the visible and natural things of this. It would be judging like the Siamese, who was positive it did not freeze in Holland, because he had never known such a thing as hard water or ice in his own

country[1]. I cannot comprehend why any one who admits the union of the soul and body should pronounce it impossible for the human nature to be united to the Divine, in a manner ineffable and incomprehensible by reason. Neither can I see any absurdity in admitting that sinful man may become regenerate, or a new creature, by the grace of God reclaiming him from a carnal life to a spiritual life of virtue and holiness. And since the being governed by sense and appetite is contrary to the happiness and perfection of a rational creature, I do not at all wonder that we are prescribed self-denial. As for the resurrection of the dead, I do not conceive it so very contrary to the analogy of nature, when I behold vegetables left to rot in the earth rise up again with new life and vigour, or a worm, to all appearance dead, change its nature, and that, which in its first being crawled on the earth, become a new species, and fly abroad with wings. And indeed, when I consider that the soul and body are things so very different and heterogeneous, I can see no reason to be positive that the one must necessarily be extinguished upon the dissolution of the other; especially since I find in myself a strong natural desire of immortality, and I have not observed that natural appetites are wont to be given in vain, or merely to be frustrated. Upon the whole, those points which you account extravagant and absurd, I dare not pronounce to be so till I see good reason for it.

12. *Cri.* No, Alciphron, your positive airs must not pass for proofs; nor will it suffice to say, things are contrary to common sense, to make us think they are so. By

[1] The argument here controverted, as well as this illustration, reappears thus in Hume's criticism of miracle. A miracle, he assumes, is 'a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from "experience" can possibly be imagined. . . . The Indian prince who refused to believe the first relations concerning the effects of frost reasoned justly.' In this Hume concludes exclusively from empirical data. But empirical data alone do not justify faith in future unalterableness in customary sequences. Besides this, 'experience' thus contrasted with 'tradition' and 'testimony' is ambiguous. No one can limit his knowledge of what happens in the universe to his own individual experience; and when he includes the experience of others, this must be gained by their testimony.

common sense, I suppose, should be meant, either the general sense of mankind, or the improved reason of thinking men[1]. Now, I believe that all those articles you have with so much capacity and fire at once summed up and exploded may be shewn to be not disagreeable, much less contrary, to common sense in one or other of these acceptations. That the gods might appear and converse among men, and that the Divinity might inhabit human nature, were points allowed by the heathens; and for this I appeal to their poets and philosophers, whose testimonies are so numerous and clear that it would be an affront to repeat them to a man of any education. And, though the notion of a Devil[2] may not be so obvious, or so fully described, yet there appear plain traces of it, either from reason or tradition. The latter Platonists, as Porphyry and Jamblichus, are very clear in the point, allowing that evil demons delude and tempt, hurt and possess mankind. That the ancient Greeks, Chaldeans, and Egyptians believed both good and bad angels may be plainly collected from Plato, Plutarch, and the Chaldean oracles. Origen observes, that almost all the Gentiles, who held the being of demons, allowed there were bad ones[3]. There is even something as early as Homer, that is thought by the learned Cardinal Bessarion[4] to allude to the fall of Satan, in the account of Ate, whom the poet represents as cast down from heaven by Jove, and then wandering about the earth, doing mischief to mankind. The same Ate is said by Hesiod to be the daughter of Discord: and by Euripides, in his Hippolytus, is mentioned as a tempter to evil. And it is very remarkable that Plutarch, in his book *De Vitando Ære Alieno*, speaks, after Empedocles, of certain demons that fell from heaven, and were banished by God, Δαίμονες θεήλατοι καὶ οὐρανοπετεῖς. Nor is that less remarkable which is observed by Ficinus, from Pherecydes

[1] The term *common sense* has two meanings, the popular and the philosophical. Popularly it expresses the average faith and intelligence of men: philosophically, this faith and intelligence developed and enlightened by rational criticism, according to the best thought of the time, in the progressive philosophical evolution, and all vindicated against fundamental doubt.

[2] The result of more recent critical examination of the history of this notion modifies what follows.

[3] [Origen, Lib. VII. contra Celsum.]—AUTHOR.

[4] [In Calumniat. Platonis, Lib. III. cap. 7.]—AUTHOR.

Syrus, that there had been a downfall of demons who revolted from God; and that Ophioneus (the old serpent) was head of that rebellious crew[1]. Then, as to other articles, let any one consider what the Pythagoreans taught of the purgation and λύσις, or deliverance of the soul: what most philosophers, but especially the Stoics, of subduing our passions: what Plato and Hierocles have said of forgiving injuries: what the acute and sagacious Aristotle writes in his Ethics to Nicomachus, of the spiritual and Divine life—that life which, according to him, is too excellent to be thought human; insomuch as man, so far forth as man, cannot attain to it, but only so far forth as he has something Divine in him: and, particularly, let him reflect on what Socrates taught, to wit, that virtue is not to be learned from men, that it is the gift of God, and that good men are not good by virtue of human care or diligence, οὐκ εἶναι ἀνθρωπίνην ἐπιμέλειαν ἢ ἀγαθοὶ ἀγαθοὶ γίγνονται[2]. Let any man who really thinks but consider what other thinking men have thought, who cannot be supposed prejudiced in favour of revealed religion; and he will see cause, if not to think with reverence of the Christian doctrines of grace, self-denial, regeneration, sanctification, and the rest, even the most mysterious, at least to judge more modestly and warily than those who shall, with a confident air, pronounce them absurd, and repugnant to the reason of mankind. And, in regard to a future state, the common sense of the gentile world, modern or ancient, and the opinions of the wisest men of antiquity, are things so well known, that I need say nothing about them[3]. To me it seems, the minute philosophers, when they appeal to reason and common sense, mean only the sense of their own party: a coin, how current soever among themselves, that other men will bring to the touchstone, and pass for no more than it is worth.

Lys. Be those notions agreeable to what or whose sense

[1] [Vide Argum. in Phædrum Platonis.]—Author.

[2] [Vide Plat. in Protag. et alibi passim.]—Author.

[3] The rationale of hope of a better life after death is not much gone into by Berkeley. Is this hope not so far founded on the inconsistency of the inevitable faith in Omnipotent Goodness with the supposition that this mixed and confused life is the only life of the persons who inhabit our planet—in a universe that is essentially divine?

they may, they are not agreeable to mine. And if I am thought ignorant for this, I pity those who think me so.

13. I enjoy myself, and follow my own courses, without remorse or fear; which I should not do, if my head were filled with enthusiasm; whether gentile or Christian, philosophical or revealed, it is all one to me. Let others know or believe what they can, and make the best of it; I, for my part, am happy and safe in my ignorance.

Cri. Perhaps not so safe neither.

Lys. Why, surely you will not pretend that ignorance is criminal?

Cri. Ignorance alone is not a crime. But that wilful ignorance, affected ignorance, ignorance from sloth, or conceited ignorance, is a fault, might easily be proved by the testimony of heathen writers; and it needs no proof to shew that, if ignorance be our fault, we cannot be secure in it as an excuse.

Lys. Honest Crito seems to hint that a man should take care to inform himself while alive, lest his neglect be punished when he is dead. Nothing is so pusillanimous and unbecoming a gentleman as fear; nor could you take a likelier course to fix and rivet a man of honour in guilt, than by attempting to frighten him out of it. This is the stale absurd stratagem of priests, and that which makes them and their religion more odious and contemptible to me than all the other articles put together.

Cri. I would fain know why it may not be reasonable for a man of honour, or any man who has done amiss, to fear. Guilt is the natural parent of fear; and nature is not used to make men fear where there is no occasion. That impious and profane men should expect Divine punishment doth not seem so absurd to conceive: and that, under this expectation, they should be uneasy and even afraid, how consistent soever it may or may not be with honour, I am sure consists with reason.

Lys. That thing of hell and eternal punishment is the most absurd as well as the most disagreeable thought that ever entered the head of mortal man.

Cri. But you must own that it is not an absurdity peculiar to Christians, since Socrates, that great free-thinker of Athens, thought it probable there may be such a thing as

impious men for ever punished in hell[1]. It is recorded of this same Socrates, that he has been often known to think for four-and-twenty hours together, fixed in the same posture, and wrapped up in meditation.

Lys. Our modern free-thinkers are a more lively sort of men. Those old philosophers were most of them whimsical. They had, in my judgment, a dry, narrow, timorous way of thinking, which by no means came up to the frank humour of our times.

Cri. But I appeal to your own judgment, if a man who knows not the nature of the soul can be assured, by the light of reason, whether it is mortal or immortal?

> An simul intereat nobiscum morte perempta,
> An tenebras orci visat vastasque lacunas?

Lys. But what if I know the nature of the soul? What if I have been taught that whole secret by a modern free-thinker? a man of science who discovered it not by a tiresome introversion of his faculties, not by amusing himself in a labyrinth of notions, or stupidly thinking for whole days and nights together, but by looking into things, and observing the analogy of nature.

14. This great man is a philosopher by fire, who has made many processes upon vegetables. It is his opinion that men and vegetables are really of the same species; that animals are moving vegetables, and vegetables fixed animals; that the mouths of the one and the roots of the other serve to the same use, differing only in position; that blossoms and flowers answer to the most indecent and concealed parts of the human body; that vegetable and animal bodies are both alike organised, and that in both there is life, or a certain motion and circulation of juices through proper tubes or vessels. I shall never forget this able man's unfolding the nature of the soul in the following manner:—The soul, said he, is that specific form or principle from whence proceed the distinct qualities or properties of things. Now, as vegetables are a more simple and less perfect compound, and consequently more easily analysed than animals, we will begin with the

[1] [Vide Platon. in Gorgia.]—AUTHOR. See Socrates at the end of the *Gorgias*. Cf. *Guardian*, No. 27, where Socrates is quoted.

contemplation of the souls of vegetables. Know then that the soul of any plant, rosemary for instance, is neither more nor less than its essential oil[1]. Upon this depends its peculiar fragrance, taste, and medicinal virtues, or in other words its life and operations. Separate or extract this essential oil by chemic art, and you get the soul of the plant; what remains being a dead carcass, without any one property or virtue of the plant, which is preserved entire in the oil, a drachm whereof goes further than several pounds of the plant. Now this same essential oil is itself a composition of sulphur and salt, or of a gross unctuous substance, and a fine subtle principle or volatile salt imprisoned therein[1]. The volatile salt is properly the essence of the soul of the plant, containing all its virtue; and the oil is the vehicle of this most subtle part of the soul, or that which fixes and individuates it. And as, upon separation of this oil from the plant, the plant dies, so a second death, or death of the soul, ensues upon the resolution of this essential oil into its principles; as appears by leaving it exposed for some time to the open air, so that the volatile salt or spirit may fly off; after which the oil remains dead and insipid, but without any sensible diminution of its weight, by the loss of that volatile essence of the soul, that ethereal aura, that spark of entity, which returns and mixes with the solar light[2], the universal soul of the world, and only source of life, whether vegetable, animal, or intellectual; which differ only according to the grossness or fineness of the vehicles, and the different textures of the natural alembics, or, in other words, the organised bodies where the above-mentioned volatile essence inhabits and is elaborated, where it acts and is acted upon. This chemical system lets you at once into the nature of the soul, and accounts for all its phenomena. In that compound which is called man, the soul or essential oil is what commonly goes by the name of animal spirit: for, you must know it is a point agreed by chemists, that

[1] So afterwards in *Siris*, especially sect. 8, 38, 42, 44-47, 59-61.

[2] Cf. *Siris*, e. g. sect. 43, 152, 162, 193, 194; also *First Letter to T— P— on the Virtues of Tar-Water*, sect. 16, 17. He there unfolds and adopts the ancient doctrine, that solar-fire, or light, may be regarded as 'the animal spirit of this visible world,' diffused through the universe, and the divine instrumental cause of all changes in external nature.

spirits are nothing but the more subtle oils. Now, in proportion as the essential oil of man is more subtle than that of other creatures, the volatile salt that impregnates it is more at liberty to act; which accounts for those specific properties and actions of human-kind, which distinguish them above other creatures. Hence you may learn why, among the wise ancients [1], salt was another name for wit, and in our times a dull man is said to be insipid or insulse. Aromatic oils, maturated by great length of time, turn to salts: this shews why human-kind grow wiser by age. And what I have said of the twofold death or dissolution, first of the compound, by separating the soul from the organical body, and secondly of the soul itself, by dividing the volatile salt from the oil, illustrates and explains that notion of certain ancient philosophers—that, as the man was a compound of soul and body, so the soul was compounded of the mind or intellect, and its æthereal vehicle; and that the separation of soul and body, or death of the man, is, after a long tract of time, succeeded by a second death of the soul itself, to wit, the separation or deliverance of the intellect from its vehicle, and reunion with the sun [2].

Euph. O Lysicles! your ingenious friend has opened a new scene, and explained the most obscure and difficult points in the clearest and easiest manner.

Lys. I must own this account of things struck my fancy. I am no great lover of creeds or systems; but when a notion is reasonable and grounded on experience I know how to value it.

Cri. In good earnest, Lysicles, do you believe this account to be true?

Lys. Why then in good earnest I do not know whether I do or no. But I can assure you the ingenious artist himself has not the least doubt about it. And to believe an artist in his art is a just maxim and a short way to science.

Cri. But what relation hath the soul of man to chemic art? The same reason that bids me trust a skilful artist in his art inclines me to suspect him out of his art. Men

[1] Berkeley's reverence for ancient learning grew as his life advanced. It appears more in *Siris*.

[2] *Siris* passim, with its doctrine of an elementary fire medium, or animal spirit of the universe, which instrumentally connects all things, may be compared with this curious forecast of the same in *Alciphron*.

are too apt to reduce unknown things to the standard of what they know, and bring a prejudice or tincture from things they have been conversant in, to judge thereby of things in which they have not been conversant. I have known a fiddler gravely teach that the soul was harmony; a geometrician very positive that the soul must be extended; and a physician, who, having pickled half a dozen embryos, and dissected as many rats and frogs, grew conceited, and affirmed there was no soul at all, and that it was a vulgar error.

Lys. My notions sit easy. I shall not engage in pedantic disputes about them. They who do not like them may leave them.

Euph. This, I suppose, is said much like a gentleman.

15. But pray, Lysicles, tell me whether the clergy come within that general rule of yours, that an artist may be trusted in his art?

Lys. By no means.

Euph. Why so?

Lys. Because I take myself to know as much of those matters as they do.

Euph. But you allow that, in any other profession, one who had spent much time and pains may attain more knowledge than a man of equal or better parts who never made it his particular business.

Lys. I do.

Euph. And nevertheless in things religious and Divine you think all men equally knowing.

Lys. I do not say all men. But I think all men of sense competent judges.

Euph. What! are the Divine attributes and dispensations to mankind, the true end and happiness of rational creatures, with the means of improving and perfecting their beings, more easy and obvious points than those which make the subject of every common profession?

Lys. Perhaps not: but one thing I know, some things are so manifestly absurd that no authority shall make me give into them. For instance, if all mankind should pretend to persuade me that the Son of God was born upon earth in a poor family, was spit upon, buffeted, and crucified, lived like a beggar, and died like a thief, I should

never believe one syllable of it. Common sense shews every one what figure it would be decent for an earthly prince or ambassador to make ; and the Son of God, upon an embassy from heaven, must needs have made an appearance beyond all others of great *eclat*, and in all respects the very reverse of that which Jesus Christ is reported to have made, even by his own historians.

Euph. O Lysicles ! though I had ever so much mind to approve and applaud your ingenious reasoning, yet I dare not assent to this, for fear of Crito.

Lys. Why so ?

Euph. Because he observed just now, that men judge of things they do not know, by prejudices from things they do know. And I fear he would object that you, who have been conversant in the *grand monde*, having your head filled with a notion of attendants and equipage and liveries, the familiar badges of human grandeur, are less able to judge of that which is truly Divine ; and that one who had seen less, and thought more, would be apt to imagine a pompous parade of worldly greatness not the most becoming the author of a spiritual religion, that was designed to wean men from the world, and raise them above it.

Cri. Do you think, Lysicles, if a man should make his entrance into London in a rich suit of clothes, with a hundred gilt coaches, and a thousand laced footmen ; that this would be a more Divine appearance, and have more of true grandeur in it, than if he had power with a word to heal all manner of diseases, to raise the dead to life, and still the raging of the winds and the sea ?

Lys. Without all doubt it must be very agreeable to common sense to suppose, that he could restore others to life who could not save his own. You tell us, indeed, that he rose again from the dead : but what occasion was there for him to die, the just for the unjust, the Son of God for wicked men ? And why in that individual place ? Why at that very time above all others ? Why did he not make his appearance earlier, and preach in all parts of the world, that the benefit might have been more extensive [1and equal] ? Account for all these points, and reconcile

[1] Added in the second edition.

them, if you can, to the common notions and plain sense of mankind.

Cri. And what if those, as well as many other points, should lie out of the road that we are acquainted with; must we therefore explode them, and make it a rule to condemn every proceeding as senseless that doth not square with the vulgar sense of man? [[1] That, indeed, which evidently contradicts sense and reason you have a right to disbelieve. And when you are unjustly treated you have the same right to complain. But I think you should distinguish between matter of debt and matter of favour. Thus much is observed in all intercourse between man and man; wherein acts of mere benevolence are never insisted on, or examined and measured with the same accurate line as matters of justice. Who but a minute philosopher would, upon a gratuitous distribution of favours, inquire, why at this time, and not before? why to these persons, and not to others? Various are the natural abilities and opportunities of human-kind. How wide a difference is there in respect of the law of nature between one of our stupid ploughmen and a minute philosopher! between a Laplander and an Athenian! That conduct, therefore, which seems to you partial and unequal may be found as well in the dispensation of natural religion as of revealed. And, if so, why it should be made an objection against the one more than the other, I leave you to account[2].] If the precepts and certain primary tenets of religion appear in the eye of reason good and useful; and if they are also found to be so by their effects; we may, for the sake of them, admit certain other points or doctrines recommended with them to have a good tendency, to be right and true, although we cannot discern their goodness or truth by the mere light of human reason, which may well be supposed an insufficient judge of the proceedings, counsels, and designs of Providence; and this sufficeth to make our conviction reasonable.

16. It is an allowed point that no man can judge of this

[1] Added in the second edition.

[2] So Bishop Butler in his *Analogy*, who fails to deal with the objection, when it is carried back to 'natural religion' itself, and equally directed against it.

or that part of a machine taken by itself, without knowing the whole, the mutual relation or dependence of its parts, and the end for which it was made[1]. And, as this is a point acknowledged in corporeal and natural things, ought we not, by a parity of reason, to suspend our judgment of a single unaccountable part of the Divine economy, till we are more fully acquainted with the moral system, or world of spirits, and are let into the designs of God's Providence, and have an extensive view of His dispensations, past, present, and future? Alas! Lysicles, what do you know even of yourself, whence you come, what you are, or whither you are going? To me it seems that a minute philosopher is like a conceited spectator, who never looked behind the scenes, and yet would judge of the machinery; who, from a transient glimpse of a part only of some one scene, would take upon him to censure the plot of a play[2].

Lys. As to the plot I will not say; but in half a scene a man may judge of an absurd actor. With what colour or pretext can you justify the vindictive, froward, whimsical behaviour of some inspired teachers or prophets[3]? Particulars that serve neither for profit nor pleasure I make a shift to forget; but in general the truth of this charge I do very well remember.

Cri. You need be at no pains to prove a point I shall neither justify nor deny. [[4] I would only beg leave to observe that it seems a sure sign of sincerity in the sacred writers, that they should be so far from palliating the defects as to publish even the criminal and absurd actions of those very persons whom they relate to have been inspired.] That there have been human passions, infirmities, and defects, in persons inspired by God, I freely own; nay, that very wicked men have been inspired, as Balaam for instance and Caiaphas, cannot be denied. But what will you infer from thence? Can you prove it impossible that a weak or sinful man should become an instrument of the Spirit of God, for conveying His purpose to other

[1] So in Butler's *Analogy*, Pt. I. ch. 7.

[2] This of Crito may again be compared with the negative argument in Butler's *Analogy*, Pt. I, ch. 7.

Alciphron appeared four years before the *Analogy*.

[3] So Tindal.

[4] Introduced in the third edition.

sinners, or that Divine light may not, as well as the light of the sun, shine on a foul vessel without polluting its rays?

Lys. To make short work, the right way would be to put out our eyes, and not judge at all[1].

Cri. I do not say so; but I think it would be right, if some sanguine persons upon certain points suspected their own judgment.

Alc. But the very things said to be inspired, taken by themselves and in their own nature, are sometimes so wrong, to say no worse, that a man may pronounce them not to be Divine at first sight; without troubling his head about the system of Providence or connexion of events—as one may say that grass is green without knowing or considering how it grows, what uses it is subservient to, or how it is connected with the mundane system. Thus, for instance, the spoiling of the Egyptians, and the extirpation of the Canaanites, every one at first glance sees to be cruel and unjust, and may therefore, without deliberating, pronounce them unworthy of God[2].

Cri. But, Alciphron, to judge rightly of these things, may it not be proper to consider how long the Israelites had wrought under those severe task-masters of Egypt, what injuries and hardships they had sustained from them, what crimes and abominations the Canaanites had been guilty of, what right God hath to dispose of the things of this world, to punish delinquents, and to appoint both the manner and the instruments of His justice? Man, who has not such right over his fellow-creatures, who is himself a fellow-sinner with them, who is liable to error as well as passion, whose views are imperfect, who is governed more by prejudice than the truth of things, may not improbably deceive himself, when he sets up for a judge of the proceedings of the holy, omniscient, impassive Creator and Governor of all things.

17. *Alc.* Believe me, Crito, men are never so industrious to deceive themselves, as when they engage to defend

[1] 'He that takes away reason, to make way for [christian] revelation, puts out the light of both; and does muchwhat the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope.'—Locke, *Essay*, Bk. IV. ch. 19, § 4.

[2] Tindal argues thus.

their prejudices. You would fain reason us out of all use of our reason. Can anything be more irrational? To forbid us to reason on the Divine dispensations is to suppose they will not bear the test of reason; or, in other words, that God acts without reason, which ought not to be admitted, no, not in any single instance. For if in one, why not in another? Whoever, therefore, allows a God must allow that He always acts reasonably. I will not therefore attribute to Him actions and proceedings that are unreasonable. He hath given me reason to judge withal; and I will judge by that unerring light, lighted from the universal lamp of nature.

Cri. O Alciphron! as I frankly own the common remark to be true, that when a man is against reason, it is a shrewd sign reason is against him; so I should never go about to dissuade any one, much less one who so well knew the value of it, from using that noble talent. On the contrary, upon all subjects of moment, in my opinion, a man ought to use his reason: but then, whether it may not be reasonable to use it with some deference to superior reason, it will not perhaps be amiss to consider. [[1] He who hath an exact view of the measure, and of the thing to be measured, if he applies the one to the other, may, I grant, measure exactly. But he who undertakes to measure, without knowing either, can be no more exact than he is modest. It may not, nevertheless, be impossible to find a man who, having neither an abstract idea of moral fitness, nor an adequate idea of the Divine economy, shall yet pretend to measure the one by the other.]

Alc. It must surely derogate from the wisdom of God, to suppose His conduct cannot bear being inspected, not even by the twilight of human reason.

Euph. You allow, then, God to be wise?

Alc. I do.

Euph. What! infinitely wise?

Alc. Even infinitely.

Euph. His wisdom, then, far exceeds that of man?

Alc. Vastly.

Euph. Probably more than the wisdom of man that of a child?

Alc. Without all question.

[1] Added in the second edition.

Euph. What think you, Alciphron, must not the conduct of a parent seem very unaccountable to a child, when its inclinations are thwarted, when it is put to learn the letters, when it is obliged to swallow bitter physic, to part with what it likes, and to suffer and do, and see, many things done contrary to its own judgment, however reasonable or agreeable to that of others?

Alc. This I grant.

Euph. Will it not therefore follow from hence, by a parity of reason, that the little child, *man*, when it takes upon it to judge of the schemes of parental Providence; and, a thing of yesterday, to criticise the economy of the Ancient of Days; will it not follow, I say, that such a judge, of such matters, must be apt to make very erroneous judgments? esteeming those things in themselves unaccountable, which he cannot account for, and concluding of some certain points, from an appearance of arbitrary carriage towards him, which is suited to his infancy and ignorance, that they are in themselves capricious or absurd, and cannot proceed from a wise, just, and benevolent God. This single consideration, if duly attended to, would, I verily think, put an end to many conceited reasonings against revealed religion[1].

Alc. You would have us then conclude, that things, to our wisdom unaccountable, may nevertheless proceed from an abyss of wisdom which our line cannot fathom[2]; and that prospects viewed but in part, and by the broken, tinged light of our intellects, though to us they may seem disproportionate and monstrous, may nevertheless appear quite otherwise to another eye, and in a different situation: in a word, that as human wisdom is but childish folly, in respect of the Divine, so the wisdom of God may sometimes seem foolishness to man.

18. *Euph.* I would not have you make these conclusions, unless in reason you ought to make them: but, if they are reasonable, why should you not make them?

[1] 'Revealed religion', i. e. 'revealed' in the narrower sense of the revelation, i. e. confined to Christianity.

[2] So Hume: 'Our line is too short to fathom such immense abysses.' See his *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 7, *passim*.

Alc. Some things may seem reasonable at one time and not at another: and I take this very apology you make, for credulity and superstition, to be one of those things. When I view it in its principles, it seems naturally to follow from just concessions; but, when I consider its consequences, I cannot agree to it. A man had as good abdicate his nature as disclaim the use of reason. A doctrine is unaccountable; therefore it must be Divine!

Euph. Credulity and superstition are qualities so disagreeable and degrading to human nature, so surely an effect of weakness, and so frequently a cause of wickedness, that I should be very much surprised to find a just course of reasoning lead to them. I can never think that reason is a blind guide to folly, or that there is any connexion between truth and falsehood; no more than I can think a thing's being unaccountable a proof that it is Divine. Though, at the same time, I cannot help acknowledging it follows from your own avowed principles, that a thing's being unaccountable, or incomprehensible to *our* reason, is no sure argument to conclude it is not Divine; especially when there are collateral proofs of its being so. A child is influenced by the many sensible effects it hath felt of paternal love and care and superior wisdom, to believe and do several things with an implicit faith and obedience: and if we, in the same manner, from the truth and reasonableness which we plainly see in so many points within our cognizance, and the advantages which we experience from the seed of the gospel sown in good ground, were disposed to an implicit belief of certain other points, relating to schemes we do not know, or subjects to which our talents are perhaps disproportionate, I am tempted to think it might become our duty, without dishonouring our reason; which is never so much dishonoured as when it is foiled, and never in more danger of being foiled than by judging where it hath neither means nor right to judge.

Lys. I would give a good deal to see that ingenious gamester Glaucus have the handling of Euphranor one night at our club. I own he is a peg too high for me in some of his notions. But then he is admirable at vindicating human reason against the impositions of priestcraft.

19. *Alc.* He would undertake to make it as clear as daylight, that there was nothing worth a straw in Christianity, but what every one knew, or might know, as well without as with it, before as since Jesus Christ.

Cri. That great man, it seems, teacheth, that common sense alone is the pole-star by which mankind ought to steer; and that what is called revelation must be ridiculous, because it is unnecessary and useless, the natural talents of every man being sufficient to make him happy, good, and wise, without any further correspondence from heaven either for light or aid.

Euph. I have already acknowledged how sensible I am, that my situation in this obscure corner of the country deprives me of many advantages, to be had from the conversation of ingenious men in town. To make myself some amends, I am obliged to converse with the dead and my own thoughts, which last I know are of little weight against the authority of Glaucus, or such-like great men in the minute philosophy[1]. But what shall we say to Socrates, for he too was of an opinion very different from that ascribed to Glaucus[2]?

Alc. For the present we need not insist on authorities, ancient or modern, or inquire which was the greater man, Socrates or Glaucus. Though, methinks, for so much as authority can signify, the present times, gray and hoary with age and experience, have a manifest advantage over those that are falsely called *ancient*[3]. But, not to dwell on authorities, I tell you in plain English, Euphranor, we do not want your revelations; and that for this plain reason,

[1] Collins, for instance, and Tindal, in *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, published in 1730, when Berkeley was in his 'obscure corner' at Rhode Island. The latter part of Butler's *Analogy* was apparently directed against Tindal.

[2] For Socrates, see, among other places, the closing passages of the *Meno*, and in the *Symposium*.

[3] A maxim reiterated by Bacon: 'The old age of the world is to be accounted the true antiquity; and this belongs to our own age, not to that earlier age in which the so-called antients lived; which though in relation to us it was the elder, yet as regards the world itself it was the younger. And truly as we look for greater knowledge and judgment in the old than in the young, because of their greater experience, so from our age more might be expected than from ancient times, seeing that the world is now grown older, and become stored with a larger and richer experience.' (*Novum Organum*, Bk. I. 84.)

those that are clear everybody knew before, and those that are obscure nobody is the better for.

Euph. [[1]As it is impossible that a man should believe the practical principles of the Christian religion, and not be the better for them; so, it is evident that those principles may be much more easily taught as points of *faith*[2] than demonstrated or discovered as points of *science*. This I call evident, because it is a plain fact. Since we daily see that many are instructed in matters of faith; that few are taught by scientific demonstration; and that there are still fewer who can discover truth for themselves. Did minute philosophers but reflect how rarely men are swayed or governed by mere ratiocination, and how often by faith, in the natural or civil concerns of the world! how little they know, and how much they believe! How uncommon is it to meet with a man who argues justly, who is in truth a master of reason, or walks by that rule! How much better (as the world goes) men are qualified to judge of facts than of reasonings, to receive truth upon testimony than to deduce it from principles! How general a spirit of trust or reliance runs through the whole system of life and opinion! And at the same time how seldom the dry light of unprejudiced nature is followed or to be found! I say, did our thinking men but bethink themselves of these things, they would perhaps find it difficult to assign a good reason why faith, which hath so great a share in everything else, should yet have none in religion. But to come more closely to your point.] Whether it was possible for mankind to have known all parts of the Christian religion, besides mysteries and positive institutions, is not the question between us; and that they actually did not know them is too plain to be denied. This, perhaps, was for want of making a due use of reason. But, as to the usefulness of revelation, it seems much the same thing whether they could not know, or would not be at the pains to know, the doctrines revealed. And, as for those doctrines which were too obscure to penetrate, or too sublime

[1] The sentences within brackets were introduced in the second edition.

[2] 'taught as points of *faith*', i.e. on the authority of *persons*. 'Faith' seems here to be taken in its popular meaning; not as the ultimate venture on which applied reason in *man* finally rests, for man lacks omniscience.

to reach, by natural reason; how far mankind may be the better for them is more, I had almost said, than even you or Glaucus can tell.

20. *Alc.* But, whatever may be pretended as to obscure doctrines and dispensations, all this hath nothing to do with prophecies; which, being altogether relative to mankind, and the events of this world, to which our faculties are surely well enough proportioned, one might expect should be very clear, and such as might inform instead of puzzling us.

Euph. And yet it must be allowed that, as some prophecies are clear, there are others very obscure: but, left to myself, I doubt I should never have inferred from thence that they were not Divine. In my own way of thinking, I should have been apt to conclude that the prophecies we understand are a proof for inspiration; but that those we do not understand are no proof against it. Inasmuch as for the latter our ignorance, or the reserve of the Holy Spirit may account; but for the other nothing, for aught that I see, can account but inspiration.

Alc. Now I know several sagacious men who conclude this very differently from you, to wit, that the one sort of prophecies is nonsense, and the other contrived after the events[1]. Behold the difference between a man of free thought and one of narrow principles!

Euph. It seems then they reject the Revelations because they are obscure, and Daniel's prophecies because they are clear.

Alc. Either way a man of sense sees cause to suspect there has been foul play.

Euph. Your men of sense are, it seems, hard to please.

Alc. Our philosophers are men of piercing eyes.

Euph. I suppose such men never make transient judgments from transient views, but always establish fixed conclusions upon a thorough inspection of things. For my own part, I dare not engage with a man who has examined those points so nicely as it may be presumed

[1] So Collins, in his sceptical *Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1724), and especially in his *Scheme of Literal Prophecy considered* (1727). In the second of these, 'the Book of Daniel' is the object of criticism.

you have done; but I could name some eminent writers of our own, now living, whose books on the subject of prophecy have given great satisfaction to gentlemen who pass for men of sense and learning here in the country[1].

Alc. You must know, Euphranor, I am not at leisure to peruse the learned writings of divines, on a subject which a man may see through with half an eye. To me it is sufficient, that the point itself is odd, and out of the road of nature. For the rest, I leave them to dispute and settle among themselves, where to fix the precise time when the sceptre departed from Judah; or whether in Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah we should compute by the Chaldean or the Julian year. My only conclusion concerning all such matters is, that I will never trouble myself about them[2].

Euph. To an extraordinary genius, who sees things with half an eye, I know not what to say. But for the rest of mankind, one would think it very rash in them to conclude, without much and exact inquiry, on the unsafe side of a question which concerns their chief interest.

Alc. Mark it well: a true genius in pursuit of truth makes swift advances on the wings of general maxims, while little minds creep and grovel amidst mean particularities. I lay it down for a certain truth, that by the fallacious arts of logic and criticism, straining and forcing, palliating, patching, and distinguishing, a man may justify or make out anything; and this remark, with one or two about prejudice, saves me a world of trouble.

Euph. You, Alciphron, who soar sublime on strong and free opinions, vouchsafe to lend a helping hand to those whom you behold entangled in the birdlime of prejudice. For my part, I find it very possible to suppose prophecy

[1] Bishop Chandler's *Defence of Christianity, from the Prophecies of the Old Testament* (1725), and his *Vindication of the Defence* (1728); Bishop Sherlock on the *Use and Intent of Prophecy* (1727); with many others. Sherlock was one of Berkeley's friends and admirers, and is said to have recommended *Alciphron* to Queen Caroline, when the author's sagacity was impugned.

[2] So Hume afterwards, in his chapter on 'Miracles'—including of course superhuman predictions of future events, faith in which, he argues, 'subverts the principles of human understanding, and gives one a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience.'

may be Divine, although there should be some obscurity at this distance, with respect to dates of time or kinds of years. You yourself own revelation[1] possible: and, allowing this, I can very easily conceive it may be odd, and out of the road of nature. I can, without amazement, meet in Holy Scripture divers prophecies, whereof I do not see the completion, divers texts I do not understand, divers mysteries above my comprehension, and ways of God to me unaccountable. Why may not some prophecies relate to parts of history I am not well enough acquainted with, or to events not yet come to pass? It seems to me that prophecies unfathomed by the hearer, or even the speaker himself, have been afterward verified and understood in the event; and it is one of my maxims, that, *what hath been may be*. Though I rub mine eyes, and do my utmost to extricate myself from prejudice, yet it still seems very possible to me that, what I do not, a more acute, more attentive, or more learned man, may understand. At least thus much is plain: the difficulty of some points or passages doth not hinder the clearness of others; and those parts of Scripture which we cannot interpret, we are not bound to know the sense of. What evil or what inconvenience, if we cannot comprehend what we are not obliged to comprehend, or if we cannot account for those things which it doth not belong to us to account for? Scriptures not understood, at one time, or by one person, may be understood at another time, or by other persons. May we not perceive, by retrospect on what is past, a certain progress from darker to lighter, in the series of the Divine economy towards man? And may not future events clear up such points as at present exercise the faith of believers? Now, I cannot help thinking (such is the force either of truth or prejudice) that in all this there is nothing strained or forced, or which is not reasonable or natural to suppose.

21. *Alc.* Well, Euphranor, I will lend you a helping hand, since you desire it, but think fit to alter my method. For, you must know, the main points of Christian belief

[1] 'revelation,' i.e. miraculous revelation. Berkeley nowhere asks what is meant by a 'miracle,' under a conception of the universe in which every natural event is supernatural.

have been infused so early, and inculcated so often by nurses, pedagogues, and priests, that, be the proofs ever so plain, it is a hard matter to convince a mind thus tinctured and stained, by arguing against revealed religion from its internal characters. I shall therefore set myself to consider things in another light, and examine your religion by certain external characters or circumstantials, comparing the system of revelation with collateral accounts of ancient heathen writers, and shewing how ill it consists with them. Know then that, the Christian revelation supposing the Jewish, it follows that, if the Jewish be destroyed, the Christian must of course fall to the ground. Now, to make short work, I shall attack this Jewish revelation in its head. Tell me, are we not obliged, if we believe the Mosaic account of things, to hold the world was created not quite six thousand years ago?

Euph. I grant we are [1].

Alc. What will you say now, if other ancient records carry up the history of the world many thousand years beyond this period? What if the Egyptians and Chinese have accounts extending to thirty or forty thousand years? What if the former of these nations have observed twelve hundred eclipses, during the space of forty-eight thousand years, before the time of Alexander the Great? What if the Chinese have also many observations antecedent to the Jewish account of the creation? What if the Chaldeans had been observing the stars for above four hundred thousand years? And what shall we say if we have successions of kings and their reigns, marked for several thousand years before the beginning of the world, assigned by Moses? Shall we reject the accounts and records of all other nations, the most famous, ancient, and learned in the world, and preserve a blind reverence for the legislator of the Jews?

Euph. And pray, if they deserve to be rejected, why should we not reject them? What if those monstrous chronologies contain nothing but names without actions, and manifest fables? What if those pretended observations

[1] The revolution in cosmical conceptions since the days of *Alciphron*, as well as in biblical exegesis and historical criticism, is obvious here and elsewhere. But is faith in Christianity dependent upon the accidents of man's knowledge of the history of this planet?

of Egyptians and Chaldeans were unknown or unregarded by ancient astronomers? What if the Jesuits have shewn the inconsistency of the like Chinese pretensions with the truth of the Ephemerides? What if the most ancient Chinese observations allowed to be authentic are those of two fixed stars, one in the winter solstice, the other in the vernal equinox, in the reign of their king Yao, which was since the flood [1]?

Alc. You must give me leave to observe, the Romish missionaries are of small credit in this point.

Euph. But what knowledge have we, or can we have, of those Chinese affairs, but by their means? The same persons that tell us of these accounts refute them: if we reject their authority in one case, what right have we to build upon it in another?

Alc. When I consider that the Chinese have annals of more than forty thousand years, and that they are a learned, ingenious, and acute people, very curious, and addicted to arts and sciences, I profess I cannot help paying some regard to their accounts of time [2].

Euph. Whatever advantage their situation and political maxims may have given them, it doth not appear they are so learned or so acute in point of science as the Europeans. The general character of the Chinese, if we may believe Trigaltius and other writers, is, that they are men of a trifling and credulous curiosity, addicted to search after the philosopher's stone, and a medicine to make men immortal, to astrology, fortune-telling, and presages of all kinds. Their ignorance in nature and mathematics is evident, from the great hand the Jesuits make of that kind of knowledge among them. But what shall we think of those extraordinary annals, if the very Chinese themselves give no credit to them for more than three thousand years before Jesus Christ? if they do not pretend to have begun to write history above four thousand years ago? and if the oldest books they have now extant, in an intelligible

[1] [Bianchini, *Histor. Univers.* cap. 17.] — AUTHOR. This learned Italian, born in 1662, formed the plan of a *Universal History*, founded on materials supplied in part by Jesuit missionaries. The first part appeared at Rome in 1697. Bianchini died in 1729.

[2] Tindal and other 'minute philosophers' made much of the Chinese and Confucius.

character, are not above two thousand years old? One would think a man of your sagacity, so apt to suspect everything out of the common road of nature, should not, without the clearest proof, admit those annals for authentic, which record such strange things as the sun's not setting for ten days, and gold raining three days together. Tell me, Alciphron, can you really believe these things without inquiring by what means the tradition was preserved, through what hands it passed, or what reception it met with, or who first committed it to writing?

Alc. To omit the Chinese and their story, it will serve my purpose as well to build on the authority of Manetho, that learned Egyptian priest, who had such opportunities of searching into the most ancient accounts of time, and copying into his dynasties the most venerable and authentic records inscribed on the pillars of Hermes.

Euph. Pray, Alciphron, where were those chronological pillars to be seen?

Alc. In the Seriadical land.

Euph. And where is that country?

Alc. I don't know.

Euph. How were those records preserved for so many ages down to the time of this Hermes, who is said to have been the first inventor of letters?

Alc. I do not know.

Euph. Did any other writers, before or since Manetho, pretend to have seen, or transcribed, or known anything about these pillars?

Alc. Not that I know.

Euph. Or about the place where they are said to have been?

Alc. If they did, it is more than I know.

Euph. Do the Greek authors that went into Egypt, and consulted the Egyptian priests, agree with these accounts of Manetho?

Alc. Suppose they do not.

Euph. Doth Diodorus, who lived since Manetho, follow, cite, or so much as mention this same Manetho?

Alc. What will you infer from all this?

Euph. If I did not know you and your principles, and how vigilantly you guard against imposture, I should infer that you were a very credulous man. For, what can we

call it but credulity to believe most incredible things on most slender authority, such as fragments of an obscure writer, disagreeing with all other historians, supported by an obscure authority of Hermes' pillars, for which you must take his word, and which contain things so improbable as successions of gods and demi-gods, for many thousand years, Vulcan alone having reigned nine thousand? There is little in these venerable dynasties of Manetho besides names and numbers; and yet in that little we meet with very strange things, that would be thought romantic in another writer: for instance, the Nile overflowing with honey, the moon grown bigger, a speaking lamb, seventy kings who reigned as many days one after another, a king a day[1]. If you are known, Alciphron, to give credit to these things, I fear you will lose the honour of being thought incredulous.

Alc. And yet these ridiculous fragments, as you would represent them, have been thought worth the pains and lucubrations of very learned men. How can you account for the work that the great Joseph Scaliger and Sir John Marsham[2] make about them?

Euph. I do not pretend to account for it. To see Scaliger add another Julian period to make room for such things as Manetho's dynasties, and Sir John Marsham take so much learned pains to piece, patch, and mend those obscure fragments, to range them in synchronisms, and try to adjust them with sacred chronology, or make them consistent with themselves and other accounts, is to me very strange and unaccountable. Why they, or Eusebius, or yourself, or any other learned man, should imagine those things deserve any regard I leave you to explain[3].

22. *Alc.* After all, it is not easy to conceive what should move, not only Manetho, but also other Egyptian priests, long before his time, to set up such great pretences to

[1] [Scal. *Can. Isag.* Lib. II.]—AUTHOR.

[2] Sir John Marsham, an Egyptian archæologist, and eminent chronologist of the seventeenth century.

[3] The most recent researches of Böckh, Bunsen, Von Pessl, and others have tended to restore the credit of Manetho, whose annals, like those of Herodotus, are confirmed by modern archæology.

antiquity, all which, however differing from one another, agree in this, that they overthrow the Mosaic history. How can this be accounted for without some real foundation? What point of pleasure, or profit, or power could set men on forging successions of ancient names and periods of time for ages before the world began?

Euph. Pray, Alciphron, is there anything so strange or singular in this vain humour of extending the antiquity of nations beyond the truth? Hath it not been observed in most parts of the world? Doth it not even in our own times shew itself, especially among those dependent and subdued people who have little else to boast of? To pass over others of our fellow-subjects who, in proportion as they are below their neighbours in wealth and power, lay claim to a more remote antiquity; are not the pretensions of Irishmen in this way known to be very great? If I may trust my memory, O'Flaherty, in his Ogygia, mentions some transactions in Ireland before the flood. The same humour, and from the same cause, appears to have prevailed in Sicily, a country for some centuries past subject to the dominion of foreigners; during which time the Sicilians have published divers fabulous accounts, concerning the original and antiquity of their cities, wherein they vie with each other. It is pretended to be proved by ancient inscriptions, whose existence or authority seems on a level with that of Hermes' pillars, that Palermo was founded in the days of the patriarch Isaac by a colony of Hebrews, Phœnicians, and Syrians; and that a grandson of Esau had been governor of a tower subsisting within these two hundred years in that city [1]. The antiquity of Messina hath been carried still higher, by some who would have us think it was enlarged by Nimrod [2]. The like pretensions are made by Catania, and other towns of that island, who have found authors of as good credit as Manetho to support them. Now, I should be glad to know why the Egyptians, a subdued people, may not pro-

[1] [Fazelli, *Hist. Sicul.* Decad. I. Lib. VIII.]—AUTHOR. The *History of Sicily* by Tomaso Fazelli, written in the fifteenth century, was esteemed by contemporary writers. Berkeley's associations with Italy and its islands appear in these references. Sicily so attracted him that he prepared materials for a natural history of the island, which, with a journal of his tour there, were lost on the passage to Naples.

[2] [Reina, *Notizie Istoriche di Messina.*]—AUTHOR.

bably be supposed to have invented fabulous accounts from the same motive, and like others valued themselves on extravagant pretensions to antiquity, when in all other respects they were so much inferior to their masters? That people had been successively conquered by Ethiopians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Grecians, before it appears that those wonderful dynasties of Manetho and the pillars of Hermes were ever heard of; as they had been by the two first of those nations before the time of Solon himself, the earliest Greek that is known to have consulted the priests of Egypt; whose accounts were so extravagant that even the Greek historians, though unacquainted with Holy Scripture, were far from giving an entire credit to them. Herodotus, making a report upon their authority, saith, those to whom such things seem credible may make the best of them, for himself declaring that it was his purpose to write what he heard [1]. And both he and Diodorus do, on divers occasions, shew the same diffidence in the narratives of those Egyptian priests. And as we observed of the Egyptians, it is no less certain that the Phœnicians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans were each a conquered and reduced people, before the rest of the world appear to have heard anything of their pretensions to so remote antiquity.

Cri. But what occasion is there to be at any pains to account for the humour of fabulous writers? Is it not sufficient to see that they relate absurdities; that they are unsupported by any foreign evidence; that they do not appear to have been in credit, even among their own countrymen; and that they are inconsistent one with another? That men should have the vanity to impose on the world by false accounts is nothing strange: it is much more so that, after what hath been done towards undeceiving the world by so many learned critics, there should be men found capable of being abused by those paltry scraps of Manetho, Berosus, Ctesias, or the like fabulous or counterfeit writers.

Alc. Give me leave to observe, those learned critics may prove to be ecclesiastics, perhaps some of them papists.

Cri. What do you think of Sir Isaac Newton, was he

[1] [Herodotus in Euterpe.]—AUTHOR.

either a papist or ecclesiastic? Perhaps you may not allow him to have been in sagacity, or force of mind, equal to the great men of the minute philosophy; but it cannot be denied that he had read and thought much upon the subject, and that the result of his inquiry was a perfect contempt of all those celebrated rivals to Moses.

Alc. It hath been observed by ingenious men, that Sir Isaac Newton, though a layman, was deeply prejudiced: witness his great regard to the Bible.

Cri. And the same may be said of Mr. Locke, Mr. Boyle, Lord Bacon, and other famous laymen, who, however knowing in some points, must, nevertheless, be allowed not to have attained that keen discernment which is the peculiar distinction of your sect.

23. But perhaps there may be other reasons beside prejudice to incline a man to give Moses the preference; on the truth of whose history the government, manners, and religion of his country were founded and framed; of whose history there are manifest traces in the most ancient books and traditions of the gentiles, particularly of the Brachmans and Persees; [not to mention the general attestation of Nature as well as Antiquity to his account of a deluge[1]] whose history is confirmed by the late invention of arts and sciences, the gradual peopling of the world, the very names of ancient nations, and even by the authority and arguments of that renowned philosopher Lucretius, who, on other points, is so much admired and followed by those of your sect. Not to mention, that the continual decrease of fluids, the sinking of hills, and the retardation[2] of planetary motions, afford so many natural proofs which shew this world had a beginning; as the civil or historical proofs above mentioned do plainly point out this beginning to have been about the time assigned in Holy Scripture. After all which I beg leave to add one observation more. To any one who considers that, on digging into the earth, such quantities of shells, and, in some places, bones and horns of animals are found sound and entire, after having lain there in all probability some thousands of years; it should seem probable that gems,

[1] Added in the third edition.

[2] 'retardation'—'diminution' in the first edition.

medals, and implements in metal and stone might have lasted entire, buried under the ground forty or fifty thousand years, if the world had been so old. How comes it then to pass that no remains are found, no antiquities of those numerous ages preceding the Scripture accounts of time; no fragments of buildings, no public monuments, no intaglias, cammeos, statues, basso-relievos, medals, inscriptions, utensils, or artificial works of any kind are ever discovered, which may bear testimony to the existence of those mighty empires, those successions of monarchs, heroes, and demi-gods, for so many thousand years? Let us look forward and suppose ten or twenty thousand years to come; during which time we will suppose that plagues, famines, wars, and earthquakes shall have made great havoc in the world;—is it not highly probable that, at the end of such a period, pillars, vases, and statues now in being, of granite, porphyry, or jasper (stones of such hardness as we know them to have lasted two thousand years above ground, without any considerable alteration), would bear record of these and past ages? Or, that some of our current coins might then be dug up, or old walls, and the foundations of buildings shew themselves, as well as the shells and stones of the primeval world are preserved down to our times? To me it seems to follow from these considerations, which common sense and experience make all men judges of, that we may see good reason to conclude, the world was created about the time recorded in Holy Scripture. And if we admit a thing so extraordinary as the creation of this world, it should seem that we admit something strange, and odd, and new to human apprehension, beyond any other miracle whatsoever[1].

[1] This curious passage, in proof of the recent origin of this planet, was perhaps suggested by some of Newton's or Boyle's speculations, or by Leibniz. 'It is evident,' says Newton, in a passage thus translated from his *Optics*, in Dr. Samuel Clarke's *Third Reply* to Leibniz, 'that motion can on the whole both increase and diminish. But, because of the tenacity of fluid bodies, and the attrition of their parts, and the weakness of elastic force in solid bodies, motion is, in the nature of things, always more apt to diminish than to increase. . . . Since, therefore, all the various motions that are in the world are perpetually decreasing; it is absolutely necessary, in order to preserve and renew those motions, that we have recourse to some

24. *Alciphron* sat musing and made no answer.

Whereupon *Lysicles* expressed himself in the following manner:—I must own I should rather suppose with Lucretius, that the world was made by chance, and that men grew out of the earth, like pompions, than pin my faith on those wretched fabulous fragments of Oriental history. And as for the learned men who have taken pains to illustrate and piece them together, they appear to me no better than so many musty pedants. An ingenious free-thinker may perhaps now and then make some use of their lucubrations, and play one absurdity against another. But you are not therefore to think he pays any real regard to the authority of such apocryphal writers, or believes one syllable of the Chinese, Babylonian, or Egyptian traditions. If we seem to give them a preference before the Bible, it is only because they are not established by law. This is my plain sense of the matter, and I dare say it is the general sense of our sect; who are too rational to be in earnest on such trifles, though they sometimes give hints of deep erudition, and put on a grave face to divert themselves with bigots.

Alc. Since Lysicles will have it so, I am content not to build on accounts of time preceding the Mosaic. I must nevertheless beg leave to observe, there is another point of a different nature, against which there do not lie the same exceptions, that deserves to be considered, and may serve our purpose as well. I presume it will be allowed that historians, treating of times within the Mosaic account, ought by impartial men to be placed on the same foot with

active principles.'—(*Papers between Leibniz and Clarke, in* 1715 *and* 1716, *relating to the Principles of Natural Philosophy and Religion*, p. 87.) 'The active forces which are in the universe,' Clarke remarks, 'diminishing themselves so as to stand in need of new impressions, is no inconvenience, no disorder, no imperfection in the workmanship of the universe; but is the consequence of the nature of *dependent* things.' (pp. 85, 87.) 'The present frame of the solar system (for instance) according to the present laws of motion, will in time fall into confusion; and perhaps after that will be amended, or put into a new form. But this amendment is only relative, with regard to *our* conceptions. In reality, and with regard to God, the present frames and the consequent disorder, and the following renovation, are all equally parts of the design framed in God's original perfect idea.' (pp. 45, 47.) Cf. *De Motu*, sect. 19, 32, 36, and the *Protogæa* of Leibniz.

Moses. It may therefore be expected that those who pretend to vindicate his writings should reconcile them with parallel accounts of other authors, treating of the same times, things, and persons. And, if we are not attached singly to Moses, but take our notions from other writers, and the probability of things, we shall see good cause to believe the Jews were only a crew of leprous Egyptians, driven from their country on account of that loathsome distemper; and that their religion, pretended to have been delivered from Heaven at Mount Sinai, was in truth learned in Egypt, and brought from thence.

Cri. Not to insist on what cannot be denied, that an historian writing of his own times is to be believed before others who treat of the same subject several ages after, it seems to me that it is absurd to expect that we should reconcile Moses with profane historians, till you have first reconciled them one with another. In answer, therefore, to what you observe, I desire you would consider, in the first place, that Manetho, Chæremon, and Lysimachus had published inconsistent accounts of the Jews, and their going forth from Egypt[1]: in the second place, that their language is a plain proof they were not of Egyptian, but either of Phœnician, of Syrian, or of Chaldean original: and, in the third place, that it doth not seem very probable to suppose their religion, the basis or fundamental principle of which was the worship of one supreme God, and the principal design of which was to abolish idolatry, could be derived from Egypt, the most idolatrous of all nations. It must be owned, the separate situation and institutions of the Jews occasioned their being treated by some foreigners with great ignorance and contempt of them and their original. But Strabo, who is allowed to have been a judicious and inquisitive writer, though he was not acquainted with their true history, makes more honourable mention of them. He relates that Moses, with many other worshippers of one infinite God, not approving the image-worship of the Egyptians and other nations, went out from Egypt and settled at Jerusalem, where they built a temple to one only God without images[2].

[1] [Joseph. *Contra Apion.* Lib. I.]—AUTHOR.
[2] [Strab. Lib. XVI.]—AUTHOR.

25. *Alc.* We who assert the cause of liberty against religion, in these later ages of the world, lie under great disadvantages, from the loss of ancient books, which cleared up many points to the eyes of those great men, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, which at a greater distance and with less help cannot be so easily made out by us: but, had we those records, I doubt not we might demolish the whole system at once.

Cri. And yet I make some doubt of this; because those great men, as you call them, with all those advantages, could not do it.

Alc. That must needs have been owing to the dullness and stupidity of the world in those days, when the art of reasoning was not so much known and cultivated as of late. But those men of true genius saw through the deceit themselves, and were very clear in their opinion, which convinces me they had good reason on their side.

Cri. And yet that great man Celsus seems to have had very slight and inconstant notions: one while, he talks like a thorough Epicurean; another, he admits miracles, prophecies, and a future state of rewards and punishments. What think you, Alciphron, is it not something capricious in so great a man, among other advantages which he ascribes to brutes above human-kind, to suppose they are magicians and prophets; that they have a nearer commerce and union with the Divinity; that they know more of men; and that elephants, in particular, are of all others most religious animals and strict observers of an oath[1].

Alc. A great genius will be sometimes whimsical. But what do you say to the Emperor Julian? was he not an extraordinary man?

Cri. He seems by his writings to have been lively and satirical. Further, I make no difficulty of owning that he was a generous, temperate, gallant, and facetious emperor. But at the same time it must be allowed, because his own heathen panegyrist Ammianus Marcellinus[2] allows it, that he was a prating, light, vain, superstitious sort of man. And therefore his judgment or authority can be of but small weight with those who are not prejudiced in his favour.

[1] [Origen, *Contra Celsum*, Lib. IV.]—Author.
[2] [Am. Marcellin. Lib. XXV.]—Author.

Alc. But of all the great men who wrote against revealed religion, the greatest without question was that truly great man Porphyry, the loss of whose invaluable work can never be sufficiently lamented. This profound philosopher went to the bottom and original of things. He most learnedly confuted the Scriptures, shewed the absurdity of the Mosaic accounts, undermined and exposed the prophecies, and ridiculed allegorical interpretations [1]. The moderns, it must be owned, have done great things, and shewn themselves able men ; yet I cannot but regret the loss of what was done by a person of such vast abilities, and who lived so much nearer the fountain-head ; though his authority survives his writings, and must still have its weight with impartial men, in spite of the enemies of truth.

Cri. Porphyry, I grant, was a thorough infidel, though he appears by no means to have been incredulous. It seems he had a great opinion of wizards and necromancers, and believed the mysteries, miracles, and prophecies of Theurgists and Egyptian priests. He was far from being an enemy to obscure jargon ; and pretended to extraordinary ecstasies. In a word, this great man appears to have been as unintelligible as a schoolman, as superstitious as a monk, and as fanatical as any Quietist or Quaker ; and, to complete his character as a minute philosopher, he was under strong temptations to lay violent hands on himself. We may frame a notion of this patriarch of infidelity by his judicious way of thinking upon other points as well as the Christian religion. So sagacious was he as to find out that the souls of insects, when separated from their bodies, became rational : that demons of a thousand shapes assist in making philtrums and charms, whose spiritual bodies are nourished and fattened by the steams of libations and sacrifices : that the ghosts of those who died violent deaths used to haunt and appear about their sepulchres. This same egregious philosopher adviseth a wise man not to eat flesh, lest

[1] [Luc. Holstenius, *De Vita et Scriptis Porphyrii.*] — AUTHOR. Holstenius was a German scholar of the seventeenth century, who renounced Protestantism, it is said, in consequence of studying Plato and the Fathers. He removed to Italy, was librarian of Cardinal Barbarini, annotated various ancient writers, and died at Rome in 1661.

the impure soul of the brute that was put to violent death should enter, along with the flesh, into those who eat it. He adds, as a matter of fact confirmed by many experiments, that those who would insinuate into themselves the souls of such animals as have the gift of foretelling things to come, need only eat a principal part, the heart, for instance, of a stag or a mole, and so receive the soul of the animal, which will prophesy in them like a god [1]. No wonder if men whose minds were preoccupied by faith and tenets of such a peculiar kind should be averse from the reception of the gospel. Upon the whole, we desire to be excused if we do not pay the same deference to the judgment of men that appear to us whimsical, superstitious, weak, and visionary, which those impartial gentlemen do, who admire their talents, and are proud to tread in their footsteps.

Alc. Men see things in different views: what one admires another contemns: it is even possible for a prejudiced mind, whose attention is turned towards the faults and blemishes of things, to fancy some shadow of defect in those great lights which in our own days have enlightened, and still continue to enlighten, the world.

26. But pray tell me, Crito, what you think of Josephus. He is allowed to have been a man of learning and judgment. He was himself an assertor of revealed religion. And Christians, when his authority serves their turn, are used to cite him with respect.

Cri. All this I acknowledge.

Alc. Must it not then seem very strange, and very suspicious to every impartial inquirer, that this learned Jew, writing the history of his own country, of that very place, and those very times, where and when Jesus Christ made His appearance, should yet say nothing of the character, miracles, and doctrine of that extraordinary person? Some ancient Christians were so sensible of this that, to make amends, they inserted a famous passage [2] in that historian; which imposture hath been sufficiently detected by able critics in the last age.

[1] [Vide Porphyrium *De Abstinentia, De Sacrificiis, De Diis et Dæmonibus.*]—AUTHOR.

[2] Josephus, *Ant.* Lib. XVIII. cap. 3, where the life, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus are referred to, and He is spoken of as 'a wise man, if it be lawful to call Him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works,' &c.

Cri. Though there are not wanting able critics on the other side of the question, yet, not to enter upon the discussion of that celebrated passage, I am content to give you all you can desire, and suppose it not genuine, but the pious fraud of some wrong-headed Christian, who could not brook the omission in Josephus. But this will never make such omission a real objection against Christianity. Nor is there, for aught I can see, anything in it whereon to ground either admiration or suspicion, inasmuch as it should seem very natural, supposing the gospel account exactly true, for Josephus to have said nothing of it: considering that the view of that writer was to give his country some figure in the eye of the world, which had been greatly prejudiced against the Jews and knew little of their history, to which end the life and death of our Saviour would not in any wise have conduced; considering that Josephus could not have been an eye-witness of our Saviour or His miracles; considering that he was a Pharisee of quality and learning, foreign as well as Jewish, one of great employment in the state, and that the gospel was preached to the poor; that the first instruments of spreading it and the first converts to it were mean and illiterate, that it might not seem the work of man, or beholden to human interest or power; considering the general prejudice of the Jews, who expected in the Messiah a temporal and conquering prince, which prejudice was so strong, that they chose rather to attribute our Saviour's miracles to the devil, than acknowledge Him to be the Christ; considering also the hellish disorder and confusion of the Jewish state in the days of Josephus, when men's minds were filled and astonished with unparalleled wars, dissensions, massacres, and seditions of that devoted people. Laying all these things together, I do not think it strange that such a man, writing with such a view, at such a time, and in such circumstances, should omit to describe our blessed Saviour's life and death, or to mention His miracles, or to take notice of the state of the Christian church, which was then as a grain of mustard-seed beginning to take root and germinate. And this will seem still less strange, if it be considered that the apostles in a few years after our Saviour's death departed from Jerusalem, setting themselves to con-

vert the gentiles, and were dispersed throughout the world; that the converts in Jerusalem were, not only of the meanest of the people, but also few; the three thousand added to the church in one day upon Peter's preaching in that city, appearing to have been not inhabitants but strangers from all parts assembled to celebrate the feast of Pentecost; and that all the time of Josephus and for several years after, during a succession of fifteen bishops, the Christians at Jerusalem observed the Mosaic law [1], and were, consequently, in outward appearance, one people with the rest of the Jews, which must have made them less observable. I would fain know what reason we have to suppose that the gospel, which in its first propagation seemed to overlook the great or considerable men of this world, might not also have been overlooked by them, as a thing not suited to their apprehensions and way of thinking? Besides, in those early times might not other learned Jews, as well as Gamaliel [2], suspend their judgment of this new way, as not knowing what to make or say of it, being on one hand unable to quit the notions and traditions in which they were brought up, and, on the other, not daring to resist or speak against the gospel, lest they should be found to fight against God? Surely at all events, it could never be expected that an unconverted Jew should give the same account of the life, miracles, and doctrine of Jesus Christ as might become a Christian to have given; nor, on the other hand, was it at all improbable that a man of sense should beware to lessen or traduce what, for aught he knew, might have been a heavenly dispensation: between which two courses the middle was to say nothing, but pass it over in a doubtful or respectful silence. And it is observable that where this historian occasionally mentions Jesus Christ, in his account of St. James's death, he doth it without any reflection, or saying either good or bad, though at the same time he shews a regard for the apostle. It is observable, I say, that, speaking of Jesus, his expression is, 'who was called the Christ,' not who pretended to be the Christ, or who was falsely called the Christ, but simply τοῦ λεγομένου

[1] [Sulp. Sever. *Sacr. Hist.*, Lib. II, et Euseb. *Chron.* Lib. poster.]—AUTHOR.

[2] [Acts v.]—AUTHOR.

Χριστοῦ[1]. It is evident Josephus knew there was such a man as Jesus, and that He was said to be the Christ, and yet he condemns neither him nor his followers; which to me seems an argument in their favour. Certainly if we suppose Josephus to have known or been persuaded that He was an impostor, it will be difficult to account for his not saying so in plain terms. But, if we suppose him in Gamaliel's way of thinking, who suspended his judgment, and was afraid of being found to fight against God, it should seem natural for him to behave in that very manner which according to you makes against our faith, but I verily think makes for it. But what if Josephus had been a bigot, or even a Sadducee, an infidel, an atheist? What then! we readily grant there might have been persons of rank, politicians, generals, and men of letters, then as well as now, Jews as well as Englishmen, who believed no revealed religion; and that some such persons might possibly have heard of a man in low life, who performed miracles by magic, without informing themselves, or perhaps ever inquiring, about his mission and doctrine. Upon the whole, I cannot comprehend why any man should conclude against the truth of the gospel from Josephus's omitting to speak of it, any more than from his omitting to embrace it. Had the first Christians been chief-priests and rulers, or men of science and learning, like Philo and Josephus, it might perhaps with better colour have been objected that their religion was of human contrivance, than now that it hath pleased God by weak things to confound the strong. This I think sufficiently accounts, why in the beginning the gospel might overlook or be overlooked by men of a certain rank and character.

27. *Alc.* And yet it seems an odd argument in proof of any doctrine, that it was preached by simple people to simple people.

Cri. Indeed if there was no other attestation to the truth of the Christian religion, this must be owned a very weak one. But if a doctrine begun by instruments, mean as to all human advantages, and making its first progress among those who had neither wealth, nor art, nor power to grace or encourage it, should in a short time, by its

[1] [Josephus, *Ant.* Lib. XX. cap. 8, 9.]—Author.

own innate excellency, the mighty force of miracles, and the demonstration of the Spirit, not only without but against all worldly motives, spread through the world, and subdue men of all ranks and conditions of life, would it not be very unreasonable to reject or suspect it, for the want of human means? And might not this with much better reason be thought an argument of its coming from God?

Alc. But still an inquisitive man will want the testimony of men of learning and knowledge.

Cri. But, from the first century onwards, there was never wanting the testimony of such men, who wrote learnedly in defence of the Christian religion, who lived, many of them, when the memory of things was fresh, who had abilities to judge and means to know, and who gave the clearest proofs of their conviction and sincerity.

Alc. But all the while these men were Christians, prejudiced Christians, and therefore their testimony is to be suspected.

Cri. It seems then you would have Jews or heathens attest to the truths of Christianity?

Alc. That is the very thing I want.

Cri. But how can this be? Or, if it could, would not any rational man be apt to suspect such evidence, and ask how it was possible for a man really to believe such things himself and not become a Christian? The apostles and first converts were themselves Jews, and brought up in a veneration for the law of Moses, and in all the prejudices of that people: many Fathers, Christian philosophers, and learned apologists for the faith, who had been bred gentiles, were without doubt imbued with prejudices of education: and if the finger of God and force of truth converted both the one and the other from Judaism or gentileism, in spite of their prejudices to Christianity, is not their testimony so much the stronger? You have then the suffrages of both Jews and gentiles, attesting to the truth of our religion in the earliest ages. But to expect or desire the attestation of Jews remaining Jews, or of gentiles remaining gentiles, seems unreasonable: nor can it be imagined that the testimony of men, who were not converted themselves, should be the likeliest to convert others. We have indeed the testimony of heathen

writers to prove that about the time of our Saviour's birth there was a general expectation in the east of a Messiah or Prince, who should found a new dominion: that there were such people as Christians: that they were cruelly persecuted and put to death: that they were innocent and holy in life and worship: and that there did really exist in that time certain persons and facts mentioned in the New Testament. And for other points, we have learned Fathers, several of whom had been, as I have already observed, bred heathens, to attest their truth.

Alc. For my part, I have no great opinion of the capacity or learning of the Fathers, and many learned men, especially of the reformed churches abroad, are of the same mind, which saves me the trouble of looking myself into their voluminous writings.

Cri. I shall not take upon me to say, with the minute philosopher Pomponatius[1], that Origen, Basil, Augustin, and divers other Fathers were equal to Plato, Aristotle, and the greatest of the gentiles in human knowledge. But, if I may be allowed to make a judgment from what I have seen of their writings, I should think several of them men of great parts, eloquence, and learning, and much superior to those who seem to undervalue them. Without any affront to certain modern critics or translators, Erasmus may be allowed a man of fine taste, and a fit judge of sense and good writing, though his judgment in this point was very different from theirs. Some of our reformed brethren, because the Romanists attribute too much, seem to have attributed too little to them, from a very usual, though no very judicious, opposition; which is apt to lead men to remark defects, without making proper allowances, and to say things which neither piety, candour, nor good sense require them to say.

28. *Alc.* But, though I should acknowledge that a concurring testimony of many learned and able men throughout

[1] [Lib. *De Immortalitate Animæ.*] —AUTHOR. Pomponatius (1462–1525) was a bold Italian thinker, who influenced opinion in the early part of the sixteenth century. While he was a free inquirer and sceptic in philosophy, it does not appear that this interesting personage was an unbeliever in religion, although he concluded that human immortality was undemonstrable by science.

the first ages of Christianity may have its weight, yet when I consider the great number of forgeries and heresies that sprung up in those times, it very much weakens their credit.

Cri. Pray, Alciphron, would it be allowed a good argument in the mouth of a papist against the Reformation, that many absurd sects sprung up at the same time with it? Are we to wonder that, when good seed is sowing, the enemy should sow tares? But at once to cut off several objections, let us suppose in fact, what you do not deny possible, that there is a God, a devil, and a revelation from heaven committed to writing many centuries ago. Do but take a view of human nature, and consider what would probably follow from such a supposition; and whether it is not very likely there should be half-believers, mistaken bigots, holy frauds, ambitious, interested, disputing, conceited, schismatical, heretical, absurd men among the professors of such revealed religion; as well as, after a course of ages, various readings, omissions, transpositions, and obscurities in the text of the sacred oracles? And if so, I leave you to judge whether it be reasonable to make those events an objection against the being of a thing which would probably and naturally follow upon the supposal of its being?

Alc. After all, say what you will, this variety of opinions must needs shake the faith of a reasonable man. Where there are so many different opinions on the same point it is very certain they cannot all be true, but it is certain they may all be false. And the means to find out the truth! When a man of sense sets about this inquiry, he finds himself on a sudden startled and amused with hard words and knotty questions. This makes him abandon the pursuit, thinking the game not worth the chase.

Cri. But would not this man of sense do well to consider, it must argue want of discernment to reject Divine truths for the sake of human follies? Use but the same candour and impartiality in treating of religion that you would think proper on other subjects. We desire no more, and expect no less. In law, in physic, in politics, wherever men have refined, is it not evident they have been always apt to run into disputes and chicane? But will that hinder you from admitting there are many good

rules, and just notions, and useful truths in all those professions? Physicians may dispute, perhaps vainly and unintelligibly, about the animal system: they may assign different causes of distempers, some explaining them by the elementary qualities, hot and cold, moist and dry: yet this doth not hinder but the bark may be good for an ague, and rhubarb for a flux. Nor can it be inferred from the different sects which from time to time have sprung up in that profession, the dogmatic, for instance, empiric, methodic, Galenic, Paracelsian, or the hard words and knotty questions and idle theories which have grown from them, or been engrafted on them, that, therefore, we should deny the circulation of the blood, or reject their excellent rules about exercise, air, and diet.

Alc. It seems you would screen religion by the example of other professions, all which have produced sects and disputes as well as Christianity; which may in itself be true and useful, notwithstanding many false and fruitless notions engrafted on it by the wit of man. Certainly if this had been observed or believed by many acute reasoners, they would never have made the multiplicity of religious opinions and controversies an argument against religion in general.

Cri. How such an obvious truth should escape men of sense and inquiry I leave you to account: but I can very easily account for gross mistakes in those who pass for free-thinkers without ever thinking; or, if they do think, whose meditations are employed on other points of a very different nature from a serious and impartial inquiry about religion.

29. But to return: what or where is the profession of men, who never split into schisms, or never talk nonsense? Is it not evident that out of all the kinds of knowledge on which the human mind is employed there grow certain excrescences, which may be pared off, like the clippings of hair or nails in the body, and with no worse consequence? Whatever bigots or enthusiasts, whatever notional or scholastic divines may say or think, it is certain the faith derived from Christ and His apostles was not a piece of empty sophistry: they did not deliver and transmit down to us *κενὴν ἀπάτην*, but *γυμνὴν γνώμην*, to use the expression

of a holy confessor[1]. And to pretend to demolish their foundation for the sake of human superstructure, be it hay or stubble or what it will, is no argument of just thought or reason; any more than it is of fairness to suppose a doubtful sense fixed, and argue from one side of the question in disputed points. Whether, for instance, the beginning of Genesis is to be understood in a literal or allegorical sense? Whether the book of Job be a history or a parable? Being points disputed between Christians, an infidel can have no right to argue from one side of the question in those or the like cases. This or that tenet of a sect, this or that controverted notion, is not what we contend for at present, but the General Faith taught by Christ and His apostles, and preserved by universal and perpetual tradition in all the churches down to our own times. To tax or strike at this Divine Doctrine, on account of things foreign and adventitious, the speculations and disputes of curious men, is in my mind an absurdity of the same kind as it would be to cut down a fine tree, yielding fruit and shade, because its leaves afforded nourishment to caterpillars, or because spiders may now and then weave cobwebs among the branches.

Alc. To divide and distinguish would take time. We have several gentlemen very capable of judging in the gross, but that want attention for irksome and dry studies, or minute inquiries. To which, as it would be very hard to oblige men against their will, so it must be a great wrong to the world, as well as themselves, to debar them from the right of deciding according to their natural sense of things.

Cri. It were to be wished those capable men would employ their judgment and attention on the same objects. If theological inquiries are unpalatable, the field of nature is wide. How many discoveries are to be made! How many errors to be corrected in arts and sciences! How many vices to be reformed in life and manners! Why do men single out such points as are innocent and useful, when there are so many pernicious mistakes to be amended? Why set themselves to destroy the hopes of human kind and encouragements to virtue? Why delight

[1] [Socr. *Histor. Eccles.* Lib. I.]—Author.

to judge where they disdain to inquire? Why not employ their noble talents on the longitude or perpetual motion?

Alc. I wonder you should not see the difference between points of curiosity and religion. Those employ only men of a genius or humour suited to them. But all mankind have a right to censure, and are concerned to judge of these; except they will blindly submit to be governed by the stale wisdom of their ancestors, and the established laws of their country.

Cri. It should seem, if they are concerned to judge, they are not less concerned to examine before they judge.

Alc. But after all the examination and inquiry that mortal man can make about Revealed Religion, it is impossible to come at any rational sure footing. [[1]'Strange things are told us, and in proof thereof it is said that men have laid down their lives. But it may be easily conceived, and hath been often known, that men have died for the sake of opinions, the belief of which, whether right or wrong, had over-possessed their minds.

Alc. I grant you may find instances of men dying for false opinions which they believed; but can you assign an instance of a man's dying for the sake of an opinion which he did not believe. The case is inconceivable; and yet this must have been the case if the witnesses of Christ's miracles and resurrection are supposed impostors.]

30. There is, indeed, a deal of specious talk about faith founded upon miracles. But when I examine this matter thoroughly, and trace Christian faith up to its original, I find it rests upon much darkness, and scruple, and uncertainty. Instead of points evident or agreeable to human reason, I find a wonderful narrative of the Son of God tempted in the wilderness by the devil, a thing utterly unaccountable, without any end, or use, or reason whatsoever. I meet with strange histories of apparitions of angels, and voices from heaven, with surprising accounts of demoniacs, things quite out of the road of common sense and observation, with several incredible feats said to have been done by Divine power, but more probably the inven-

[1] The sentences within brackets were introduced in the third edition.

tions of men: nor the less likely to be so, because I cannot pretend to say with what view they were invented. Designs deeply laid are dark, and the less we know the more we suspect: but, admitting them for true, I shall not allow them to be miraculous, until I thoroughly know the power of what are called second causes, and the force of Magic.

Cri. You seem, Alciphron, to analyse, not faith, but infidelity, and trace it to its principles; which, from your own account, I collect to be dark and doubtful scruples and surmises, hastiness in judging, and narrowness in thinking, grounded on a fanciful notion which overrates the little scantling of your own experience, and on real ignorance of the views of Providence, and of the qualities, operations, and mutual respects of the several kinds of beings which are, or may be, for aught you know, in the universe. Thus obscure, uncertain, conceited, and conjectural are the principles of infidelity. Whereas, on the other hand, the principles of faith seem to be points plain and clear. It is a clear point that this faith in Christ was spread abroad throughout the world soon after His death. It is a clear point that this was not effected by human learning, politics, or power. It is a clear point that in the early times of the church there were several men of knowledge and integrity, who embraced this faith not from any, but against all, temporal motives. It is a clear point that, the nearer they were to the fountain-head, the more opportunity they had to satisfy themselves as to the truth of those facts which they believed. It is a clear point that the less interest there was to persuade, the more need there was of evidence to convince them. It is a clear point that they relied on the authority of those who declared themselves eye-witnesses of the miracles and resurrection of Christ. It is a clear point that those professed eye-witnesses suffered much for this their attestation, and finally sealed it with their blood. It is a clear point that these witnesses, weak and contemptible as they were, overcame the world, spread more light, preached purer models, and did more benefit to mankind than all the philosophers and sages put together.

These points appear to me clear and sure, and, being allowed such, they are plain, just, and reasonable motives of assent; they stand upon no fallacious ground, they

contain nothing beyond our sphere, neither supposing more knowledge nor other faculties than we are really masters of; and, if they should not be admitted for morally certain, as I believe they will by fair and unprejudiced inquirers, yet the allowing them to be only probable is sufficient to stop the mouth of an infidel. These plain points, I say, are the pillars of our faith, and not those obscure ones by you supposed; which are in truth the unsound uncertain principles of infidelity, to a rash, prejudiced, and assuming spirit. To raise an argument or answer an objection from hidden powers of Nature or Magic is groping in the dark; but, by the evident light of sense, men might be sufficiently certified of sensible effects and matters of fact, such as the miracles and resurrection of Christ; and the testimony of such men may be transmitted to after ages, with the same moral certainty as other historical narrations; and those same miraculous facts, compared by reason with the doctrines they were brought to prove, do afford to an unbiassed mind strong indications of their coming from God, or a superior principle, whose Goodness retrieved the moral world, whose Power commanded the natural, and whose Providence extended over both. Give me leave to say that nothing dark, nothing incomprehensible, or mysterious, or unaccountable, is the ground or motive, the principle or foundation, the proof or reason of our faith although it may be the object of it. For, it must be owned that, if by clear and sure principles we are rationally led to believe a point less clear, we do not therefore reject such point because it is mysterious to conceive, or difficult to account for; nor would it be right so to do. As for Jews and gentiles anciently attributing our Saviour's miracles to Magic, this is so far from being a proof against them that to me it seems rather a proof of the facts, without disproving the cause to which we ascribe them. As we do not pretend to know the nature and operations of demons, the history, laws, and system of rational beings, and the schemes or views of Providence, so far as to account for every action and appearance recorded in the gospel; so neither do you know enough of those things to be able, from that knowledge of yours, to object against accounts so well attested. It is an easy matter to raise scruples upon many authentic parts of civil

history, which, requiring a more perfect knowledge of facts, circumstances, and councils than we can come at to explain them, must be to us inexplicable. And this is still more easy with respect to the history of Nature, in which, if surmises were admitted for proofs against things odd, strange, and unaccountable; if our scanty experience were made the rule and measure of truth, and all those phenomena rejected, that we, through ignorance of the principles, and laws, and system of nature, could not explain, we should indeed make discoveries, but it would be only of our own blindness and presumption. And why men that are so easily and so often gravelled in common points, in things natural and visible, should yet be so sharp-sighted and dogmatical about the invisible world and its mysteries is to me a point utterly unaccountable by all the rules of logic and good sense. Upon the whole, therefore, I cannot help thinking there are points sufficiently plain, and clear, and full, whereon a man may ground a reasonable faith in Christ: but that the attacks of minute philosophers against this faith are grounded upon darkness, ignorance, and presumption.

Alc. I doubt I shall still remain in the dark as to the proofs of the Christian religion, and always presume there is nothing in them.

31. For, how is it possible, at this remote distance, to arrive at any knowledge, or frame any demonstration about it?

Cri. What then? Knowledge, I grant, in a strict sense, cannot be had without evidence or demonstration: but probable arguments are a sufficient ground of faith[1]. Who ever supposed that scientifical proofs were necessary to make a Christian? Faith alone is required; and, provided that, in the main and upon the whole, men are persuaded, this saving faith may consist with some degrees of obscurity, scruple, and error. For, although the light of truth be unchangeable, and the same in its eternal source, the Father of Lights: yet, with respect to us, it is

[1] Probability, according to Berkeley, is the correlative of Faith: the reason for Christianity is mainly moral and practical. It appeals to *man*, in the response of his complex constitution, not as pure intelligence. Cf. his *Sermon before the S. P. G.*

variously weakened and obscured, by passing through a long distance or gross medium, where it is intercepted, distorted, or tinctured, by the prejudices and passions of men. But, all this notwithstanding, he that will use his eyes may see enough for the purposes either of nature or of grace—though by a light, dimmer indeed, or clearer, according to the place, or the distance, or the hour, or the medium. And it will be sufficient if such analogy appears between the dispensations of grace and nature, as may make it probable (although much should be unaccountable in both) to suppose them derived from the same Author, and the workmanship of one and the same Hand [1].

Alc. Those who saw, and touched, and handled Jesus Christ after His resurrection, if there were any such, may be said to have seen by a clear light: but to us the light is very dim, and yet it is expected we should believe this point as well as they. For my part, I believe, with Spinosa, that Christ's death was literal, but His resurrection allegorical [2].

[1] This sentence expresses the leading conception in the *Analogy* of Butler. Butler's analogical argument is not to be confounded with Browne's proposition—that man's so-called knowledge of God and His attributes must, from the limitations of human intelligence, be only 'analogical' or figurative.

[2] [Vide Spinosæ *Epist. ad Oldenburgium.*]—AUTHOR. This is one of the few references to Spinosa by Berkeley. The following passage is probably alluded to: — 'Quod scilicet Christus non senatui, nec Pilato, nec cuiquam in prœlium, sed sanctis tantummodo apparuerit, et quod Deus neque dextram neque sinistram habeat nec in loco, sed ubique secundum essentiam sit, et quod materia ubique sit eadem, et quod Deus extra mundum in spatio, quod fingunt, imaginario, sese non manifestet, et quod denique corporis humani compages intra debitos limites solo aëris pondere cœrceatur; facile videbis hanc Christi apparitionem non absimilem esse illi qua Deus Abrahamo apparuit, quando hic vidit homines, quos ad secum prandendum invitavit. At dices, Apostolos omnes omnino credidisse quod Christus a morte resurrexerit at ad cœlum revera ascenderit: quod ego non nego. Nam ipse etiam Abrahamus credidit, quod Deus apud ipsum pransus fuerit, et omnes Israelitæ, quod Deus a cœlo igne circumdatus ad montem Sinai descenderit et cum iis immediate locutus fuerit, quum tamen hæc et plura alia hujus modi apparitiones seu revelationes fuerint, captui et opinionibus eorum hominum accommodatæ, quibus Deus mentem suam iisdem revelare voluit. Concludo, itaque, Christi a mortuis resurrectionem revera spiritualem et solis fidelibus ad eorum captum revelatam esse, nempe quod Christus æternitate donatus qui et a mortuis (mortuos hic intelligo eo sensu, quo Christus dixit—*sinite mortuos sepelire mortuos suos*) surrexit, simul atque vitâ et morte singularis sanctitatis exemplum

Cri. And, for my part, I can see nothing in this celebrated infidel that should make me desert matters of fact, and moral evidence, to adopt his notions. Though I must needs own I admit an allegorical resurrection that proves the real—to wit, a resurrection of Christ's disciples from weakness to resolution, from fear to courage, from despair to hope, of which, for aught I can see, no rational account can be given, but the sensible evidence that our Lord was truly, really, and literally risen from the dead. But as it cannot be denied that His disciples, who were eye-witnesses of His miracles and resurrection, had stronger evidence than we can have of those points[1]; so it cannot be denied, that such evidence was then more necessary, to induce men to embrace a new institution, contrary to the whole system of their education, their prejudices, their passions, their interests, and every human motive. Though to me it seems the moral evidence and probable arguments within our reach are abundantly sufficient to make prudent thinking men adhere to the faith handed down to us from our ancestors, established by the laws of our country, requiring submission in points above our knowledge, and for the rest recommending doctrines the most agreeable to our interest and our reason. And, however strong the light might have been at the fountain-head, yet its long continuance and propagation, by such unpromising instruments throughout the world, have been very wonderful. We may now take a more comprehensive view of the connexion, order, and progress of the Divine dispensations, and, by a retrospect on a long series of past ages, perceive a unity of design running throughout the whole, a gradual disclosing and fulfilling the purposes of Providence, a regular progress from types to antitypes, from things carnal to things spiritual, from earth to heaven. We may behold Christ crucified, that stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, putting a final period to the temple-worship

dedit; et eatenus discipulos suos a mortuis suscitat, quatenus ipsi hoc vitæ ejus et mortis exemplum sequuntur.'—*Epistola* XXIII. See also *Epistolæ* XXI, XXV.

[1] Cf. Berkeley's *Sermon before the S. P. G.* In the *Theologiæ Christianæ Principia Mathematica* of John Craig, published in 1699, an attempt is made to prove mathematically that the historical evidence of Christianity, gradually weakening, will be reduced to zero in A.D. 3150.

of the one and the idolatry of the other, and that stone, which was cut out of the mountain without hands and brake in pieces all other kingdoms, become itself a great mountain.

32. If a due reflexion on these things be not sufficient to beget a reverence for the Christian faith in the minds of men, I should rather impute it to any other cause than a wise and cautious incredulity: when I see their easiness of faith in the common concerns of life, where there is no prejudice or appetite to bias or disturb their natural judgment: when I see those very men that in religion will not stir a step without evidence, and at every turn expect demonstration, trust their health to a physician, their lives to a sailor, with an implicit faith, I cannot think they deserve the honour of being thought more incredulous than other men, or that they are more accustomed to know, and for this reason less inclined to believe. On the contrary, one is tempted to suspect that ignorance hath a greater share than science in our modern infidelity; and that it proceeds more from a wrong head, or an irregular will, than from deep researches.

Lys. We do not, it must be owned, think that learning or deep researches are necessary to pass right judgments upon things. I sometimes suspect that learning is apt to produce and justify whims, and sincerely believe we should do better without it. Our sect are divided on this point, but much the greater part think with me. I have heard more than once very observing men remark, that learning was the true human means which preserved religion in the world; and that, if we had it in our power to prefer blockheads in the church, all would soon be right.

Cri. Men must be strangely in love with their opinions, to put out their eyes rather than part with them. But it has been often remarked by observing men, that there are no greater bigots than infidels.

Lys. What! a free-thinker and a bigot—Impossible!

Cri. Not so impossible neither, that an infidel should be bigoted to his infidelity. Methinks I see a bigot wherever I see a man overbearing and positive without knowing why, laying the greatest stress on points of smallest moment, hasty to judge of the conscience, thoughts, and inward views of other men, impatient of reasoning against

his own opinions, and choosing them with inclination rather than judgment, an enemy to learning, and attached to mean authorities. How far our modern infidels agree with this description, I leave to be considered by those who really consider and think for themselves.

Lys. We are no bigots; we are men that discover difficulties in religion, that tie knots and raise scruples, which disturb the repose and interrupt the golden dreams of bigots, who therefore cannot endure us.

Cri. They who cast about for difficulties will be sure to find or make them upon every subject; but he that would, upon the foot of reason, erect himself into a judge, in order to make a wise judgment on a subject of that nature, will not only consider the doubtful and difficult parts of it, but take a comprehensive view of the whole, consider it in all its parts and relations, trace it to its original, examine its principles, effects, and tendencies, its proofs internal and external. He will distinguish between the clear points and the obscure, the certain and the uncertain, the essential and circumstantial, between what is genuine and what foreign. He will consider the different sorts of proof that belong to different things—where evidence is to be expected, where probability may suffice, and where it is reasonable to suppose there should be doubts and scruples. He will proportion his pains and exactness to the importance of the inquiry, and check that disposition of his mind to conclude all those notions, groundless prejudices, with which it was imbued before it knew the reason of them. He will silence his passions, and listen to truth. He will endeavour to untie knots as well as tie them, and dwell rather on the light parts of things than the obscure. He will balance the force of his understanding with the difficulty of the subject, and, to render his judgment impartial, hear evidence on all sides, and, so far as he is led by authority, choose to follow that of the honestest and wisest men. Now, it is my sincere opinion, the Christian religion may well stand the test of such an inquiry.

Lys. But such an inquiry would cost too much pains and time. We have thought of another method—the bringing religion to the test of wit and humour: this we find a much shorter, easier, and more effectual way. And, as all enemies are at liberty to choose their weapons, we make

choice of those we are most expert at: and we are the better pleased with this choice, having observed that of all things a solid divine hates a jest.

Euph.[1] To consider the whole of the subject, to read and think on all sides, to object plainly, and answer directly, upon the foot of dry reason and argument, would be a very tedious and troublesome affair. Besides, it is attacking pedants at their own weapons. How much more delicate and artful is it, to give a hint, to cover oneself with an enigma, to drop a *double entendre*, to keep it in one's power to recover, and slip aside, and leave his antagonist beating the air!

Lys. This hath been practised with great success, and I believe it the top method to gain proselytes, and confound pedants.

Cri. I have seen several things written in this way, which, I suppose, were copied from the behaviour of a sly sort of scorners one may sometimes meet with. Suppose a conceited man that would pass for witty, tipping the wink upon one, thrusting out his tongue at another; one while waggishly smiling, another with a grave mouth and ludicrous eyes; often affecting the countenance of one who smothered a jest, and sometimes bursting out in a horse-laugh: what a figure would this be, I will not say in the senate or council, but in a private visit among well-bred men! And yet this is the figure that certain great authors, who in this age would pass for models, and do pass for models, make in their polite and elaborate writings on the most weighty points[2].

Alc. I who profess myself an admirer, an adorer of reason, am obliged to own that in some cases the sharpness of ridicule can do more than the strength of argument. But if we exert ourselves in the use of mirth and humour, it is not for want of other weapons. It shall never be said that a free-thinker was afraid of reasoning. No, Crito, we have reasons in store, the best are yet to come; and if we can find an hour for another conference before we set out to-morrow morning, I will undertake you shall be plied with reasons, as clear, and home, and close to the point as you could wish.

[1] What Euphranor here says is in the first edition attributed to Lysicles.
[2] Shaftesbury.

THE SEVENTH DIALOGUE[1]

1. Christian faith impossible. 2. Words stand for ideas. 3. No knowledge or faith without ideas. 4. Grace, no idea of it. 5. Suggesting ideas not the only use of words. 6. Force as difficult to form an idea of as grace. 7. Notwithstanding which, useful propositions may be formed concerning it. 8. Belief of the Trinity and other mysteries not absurd. 9. Mistakes about faith an occasion of profane raillery. 10. Faith—its true nature and effects. 11. Illustrated by science. 12. By arithmetic in particular. 13. Sciences conversant about signs. 14. The true end of speech, reason, science, and faith. 15. Metaphysical objections as strong against human science as articles of faith. 16. No religion, because no human liberty. 17. Further proof against human liberty. 18. Fatalism a consequence of erroneous suppositions. 19. Man an accountable agent. 20. Inconsistency, singularity, and credulity of minute philosophers. 21. Untrodden paths and new light of the minute philosophers. 22. Sophistry of the minute philosophers. 23. Minute philosophers ambiguous, enigmatical, unfathomable. 24. Scepticism of the minute philosophers. 25. How a sceptic ought to behave. 26. Minute philosophers—why difficult to convince. 27. Thinking, not the epidemical evil of these times. 28. Infidelity not an effect of reason or thought: its true motives assigned. 29. Variety of opinions about religion, effects thereof. 30. Method for proceeding with minute philosophers. 31. Want of thought and want of education defects of the present age.

1. THE philosophers having resolved to set out for London next morning, we assembled at break of day in the library.

[1] In this Dialogue the argument passes from the moral evidence of Christian faith to the credibility of Christianity, notwithstanding the Mysteries that are embedded in it. Christianity, it was alleged by free-thinkers, is essentially mysterious, and, as such, cannot be vindicated by any evidence, however probable. This leads to a discussion of the relation between Faith and Science, and the utility of language even when terms do not suggest ideas; followed by an application to the mysteries of Grace, Trinity, Incarnation, Original Sin, and Free Agency—the last involving the fundamental presupposition of religion and morality. At the close of the discussion, Minute Philosophy appears to resolve into Universal Scepticism.

Alciphron began with a declaration of his sincerity, assuring us he had very maturely and with a most unbiassed mind considered all that had been said the day before. He added that upon the whole he could not deny several probable reasons were produced for embracing the Christian faith. But, said he, those reasons being only probable, can never prevail against absolute certainty and demonstration. If, therefore, I can demonstrate your religion to be a thing altogether absurd and inconsistent, your probable arguments in its defence do from that moment lose their force, and with it all right to be answered or considered. The concurring testimony of sincere and able witnesses hath without question great weight in human affairs. I will even grant that things odd and unaccountable to human judgment or experience may sometimes claim our assent on that sole motive. And I will also grant it possible for a tradition to be conveyed with moral evidence through many centuries. But at the same time you will grant to me that a thing demonstrably and palpably false is not to be admitted on any testimony whatever, which at best can never amount to demonstration. To be plain, no testimony can make nonsense sense: no moral evidence can make contradictions consistent. Know, then, that as the strength of our cause doth not depend upon, so neither is it to be decided by any critical points of history, chronology, or languages. You are not to wonder, if the same sort of tradition and moral proof which governs our assent with respect to facts in civil or natural history is not admitted as a sufficient voucher for metaphysical absurdities and absolute impossibilities. Things obscure and unaccountable in human affairs or the operations of nature may yet be possible, and, if well attested, may be assented unto; but religious assent or Faith can be evidently shewn *in its own nature* to be impracticable, impossible, and absurd. This is the primary motive to infidelity. This is our citadel and fortress, which may, indeed, be graced with outworks of various erudition, but, if those are demolished, remains in itself and of its own proper strength impregnable.

Euph. This, it must be owned, reduceth our inquiry within a narrow compass: do but make out this, and I shall have nothing more to say.

Alc. Know then that the shallow mind of the vulgar, as it dwells only on the outward surface of things, and considers them in the gross, may be easily imposed on. Hence a blind reverence for religious Faith and Mystery. But when an acute philosopher comes to dissect and analyse these points, the imposture plainly appears; and, as he has no blindness, so he has no reverence for empty notions; or, to speak more properly, for mere forms of speech, which mean nothing, and are of no use to mankind.

2. Words are signs: they do or should stand for ideas; which so far as they suggest they are significant. But words that suggest no ideas are insignificant. He who annexeth a clear idea to every word he makes use of speaks sense; but where such ideas are wanting, the speaker utters nonsense[1]. In order therefore to know whether any man's speech be senseless and insignificant, we have nothing to do but lay aside the words, and consider the ideas suggested by them. Men, not being able immediately to communicate their ideas one to another, are obliged to make use of sensible signs or words; the use of which is to raise those ideas in the hearer which are in the mind of the speaker; and if they fail of this end they serve to no purpose. He who really thinks hath a train of ideas succeeding each other and connected in his mind; and when he expresseth himself by discourse each word suggests a distinct idea to the hearer or reader; who by that means hath the same train of ideas in his which was in the mind of the speaker or writer. As far as this effect is produced, so far the discourse is intelligible, hath sense and meaning. Hence it follows that whoever can be supposed to understand what he reads or hears must have a train of ideas raised in his mind, correspondent to the train of words read or heard. These plain truths, to which men readily assent in theory, are but little attended to in practice, and therefore deserve to be enlarged on and inculcated, however obvious and undeniable. Mankind are generally averse from thinking,

[1] So Locke, *Essay*, Bk. III. ch. 2, 10, also Collins, *Philosophical Inquiry*, pp. 2, 8, who urge the need for having ideas in all the words we employ. Cf. Berkeley, *De Motu*, sect. 29. In what follows, *ideas* mean representative intuitions, or generic images.

though apt enough to entertain discourse either in themselves or others: the effect whereof is that their minds are rather stored with names than ideas, the husk of science rather than the thing. And yet these words without meaning do often make distinctions of parties, the subject-matter of their disputes, and the object of their zeal. This is the most general cause of error, which doth not influence ordinary minds alone, but even those who pass for acute and learned philosophers are often employed about names instead of things or ideas, and are supposed to know when they only pronounce hard words without a meaning.

3. Though it is evident that, as knowledge is the perception of the connexion or disagreement between ideas [1], he who doth not distinctly perceive the ideas marked by the terms, so as to form a mental proposition answering to the verbal, cannot possibly have knowledge. No more can he be said to have opinion or faith; which imply a weaker assent, but still it must be to a proposition, the terms of which are understood as clearly, although the agreement or disagreement of the ideas may not be so evident, as in the case of knowledge. I say, all degrees of assent, whether founded on reason or authority, more or less cogent, are internal acts of the mind, which alike terminate in ideas as their proper object; without which there can be really no such thing as knowledge, faith, or opinion. We may perhaps raise a dust and dispute about tenets purely verbal; but what is this at bottom more than mere trifling? All which will be easily admitted with respect to human learning and science; wherein it is an allowed method to expose any doctrine or tenet by stripping them of the words, and examining what ideas are underneath, or whether any ideas at all [2]? This is often found the shortest way to end disputes, which might otherwise grow and multiply without end, the litigants neither understanding one another nor themselves. It were needless to illustrate what shines by its own light, and is admitted by all thinking men. My endeavour shall be only to apply it in the present case. I suppose I need not be at any pains to prove that the same rules of reason and good

[1] So Locke, *Essay*, Bk. IV. ch. 1.
[2] Cf. *Principles*, 'Introduction,' sect. 23, 24.

sense which obtain in all other subjects ought to take place in religion. As for those who consider faith and reason as two distinct provinces, and would have us think good sense has nothing to do where it is most concerned, I am resolved never to argue with such men, but leave them in quiet possession of their prejudices.

And now, for the particular application of what I have said, I shall not single out any nice disputed points of school divinity, or those that relate to the nature and essence of God, which, being allowed infinite, you might pretend to screen them under the general notion of difficulties attending the nature of Infinity.

4. *Grace* is the main point in the Christian dispensation: nothing is oftener mentioned or more considered throughout the New Testament; wherein it is represented as somewhat of a very particular kind, distinct from anything revealed to the Jews, or known by the light of nature. This same grace is spoken of as the gift of God, as coming by Jesus Christ, as reigning, as abounding, as operating. Men are said to speak through grace, to believe through grace. Mention is made of the glory of grace, the riches of grace, the stewards of grace. Christians are said to be heirs of grace, to receive grace, grow in grace, be strong in grace, to stand in grace, and to fall from grace. And lastly, grace is said to justify and to save them. Hence Christianity is styled the covenant or dispensation of grace. And it is well known that no point hath created more controversy in the church than this doctrine of grace. What disputes about its nature, extent, and effects, about universal, efficacious, sufficient, preventing, irresistible grace, have employed the pens of Protestant as well as Popish divines, of Jansenists and Molinists, of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Arminians, as I have not the least curiosity to know, so I need not say. It sufficeth to observe, that there have been and are still subsisting great contests upon these points. Only one thing I should desire to be informed of, to wit, What is the clear and distinct *idea* marked by the *word* grace? I presume a man may know the bare meaning of a term, without going into the depth of all those learned inquiries. This surely is an easy matter, provided there is an idea annexed

to such term. And if there is not, it can be neither the subject of a rational dispute, nor the object of real faith. Men may indeed impose upon themselves or others, and pretend to argue and believe, when at bottom there is no argument or belief, further than mere verbal trifling. Grace taken in the vulgar sense, either for beauty, or favour, I can easily understand. But when it denotes an active, vital, ruling principle, influencing and operating on the mind of man, distinct from every natural power or motive, I profess myself altogether unable to understand it, or frame any distinct idea of it; and therefore I cannot assent to any proposition concerning it, nor consequently have any faith about it: and it is a self-evident truth, that God obligeth no man to impossibilities. At the request of a philosophical friend, I did cast an eye on the writings he shewed me of some divines, and talked with others on this subject, but after all I had read or heard could make nothing of it, having always found, whenever I laid aside the word *grace*, and looked into my own mind, a perfect vacuity or privation of all ideas. And, as I am apt to think men's minds and faculties are made much alike, I suspect that other men, if they examine what they call grace with the same exactness and indifference, would agree with me, that there was nothing in it but an empty name. This is not the only instance where a word often heard and pronounced is believed intelligible, for no other reason but because it is familiar. Of the same kind are many other points reputed necessary articles of faith. That which in the present case imposeth upon mankind I take to be partly this: men speak of this holy principle as of something that acts, moves, and determines, taking their ideas from corporeal things, from motion and the force or *momentum* of bodies, which, being of an obvious and sensible[1] nature, they substitute in place of a thing spiritual and incomprehensible, which is a manifest delusion. For, though the idea of corporeal force be never so clear and intelligible, it will not therefore follow that the idea of grace, a thing perfectly incorporeal, must be so too. And though we may reason distinctly, perceive, assent, and form opinions about the one, it will by no

[1] Cf. *De Motu*, sect. 43-66, which resolve motion into perceptible change of relative place.

means follow that we can do so of the other. Thus it comes to pass that a clear sensible idea of what is real produceth, or rather is made a pretence for, an imaginary spiritual faith that terminates in no object—a thing impossible! For there can be no assent where there are no ideas: and where there is no assent there can be no faith: and what cannot be, that no man is obliged to. This is as clear as anything in Euclid[1].

[1] The three following sections in brackets, which appear in the first and second editions of *Alciphron*, as sections 5, 6, 7, were omitted in the *amended* third edition (1752); the omission is significant if it means dissatisfaction with his former mode of assailing 'abstract ideas':—

'[5. The same method of reasoning may be applied by any man of sense to confute all other the most essential articles of the Christian faith. You are not therefore to wonder that a man who proceeds on such solid grounds, such clear and evident principles, should be deaf to all you can say from moral evidence, or probable arguments, which are nothing in the balance against demonstration.

Euph. The more light and force there are in this discourse, the more you are to blame for not having produced it sooner. For my part, I should never have said one word against evidence. But let me see whether I understand you rightly. You say, every word in an intelligible discourse must stand for an idea; which ideas as far as they are clearly and distinctly apprehended, so far the discourse hath meaning, without which it is useless and insignificant.

Alc. I do.

Euph. For instance, when I hear the word *man*, *triangle*, *colour*, pronounced, they must excite in my mind distinct ideas of those things whereof they are signs; otherwise I cannot be said to understand them.

Alc. Right.

Euph. And this is the only true use of language.

Alc. That is what I affirm.

Euph. But every time the word *man* occurs in reading or conversation, I am not conscious that the particular distinct *idea* of a man is excited in my mind. For instance, when I read in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians these words, 'If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself,' methinks I comprehend the force and meaning of this proposition, although I do not frame to myself the particular distinct idea of a man.

Alc. It is very true you do not form in your mind the particular idea of Peter, James, or John, of a fair or a black, a tall or a low, a fat or a lean, a straight or a crooked, a wise or a foolish, a sleeping or a waking man; but the abstract general idea of *man*, prescinding from and exclusive of all particular shape, size, complexion, passions, faculties, and every individual circumstance.

To explain this matter more fully, you are to understand there is in the human mind a faculty of contemplating the general nature of things, separate from all those particularities which distinguish the individuals one from another. For example, in Peter, James, and John, you may observe in each a certain collection of stature, figure, colour, and other peculiar properties by which they are known

5. *Euph.* Be the use of words or names what it will, I can never think it is to do things impossible. Let us

asunder, distinguished from all other men, and, if I may so say, individuated. Now, leaving out of the idea of a man that which is peculiar to the individual, and retaining only that which is common to all men, you form an abstract universal idea of *man* or *human nature*; which includes no particular stature, shape, colour or other quality, whether of mind or body. After the same manner you may observe particular triangles to differ one from another, as their sides are equal or unequal, and their angles greater or lesser; whence they are denominated equilateral, equicrural, or scalenum, obtusangular, acutangular, or rectangular. But the mind, excluding out of its ideas all these peculiar properties and distinctions, framed the general abstract idea of a *triangle* which is neither equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenum, neither obtusangular, acutangular, nor rectangular; but all and none of these at once *. The same may be said of the general abstract idea of *colour*, which is something distinct from and exclusive of blue, red, green, yellow, and every other particular colour, including only that general essence in which they all agree. And what has been said of these three general names, and the abstract general ideas they stand for, may be applied to all others. For you must know that particular things or ideas being infinite, if each were marked or signified by a distinct proper name, words must have been innumerable, and language an endless impossible thing. Hence it comes to pass that appellative or general names stand, immediately and properly, not for particular but for abstract general ideas; which they never fail to excite in the mind, as oft as they are used to any significant purpose. And without this there could be no communication or enlargement of knowledge, no such thing as universal science or theorems of any kind. Now, for understanding any proposition or discourse, it is sufficient that distinct ideas are thereby raised in your mind, correspondent to those in the speaker's, whether the ideas so raised are particular, or only abstract and general ideas. Forasmuch, nevertheless, as these are not so obvious and familiar to vulgar minds, it happens that some men may think they have no idea at all, when they have not a particular idea; but the truth is, you had the abstract general idea of man, in the instance assigned, wherein you thought you had none. After the same manner, when it is said that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones; or that colour is the object of sight; it is evident the words do not stand for this or that triangle or colour, but for *abstract general ideas*, excluding everything peculiar to the individuals, and including only the Universal Nature common to the whole kind of triangles or of colours.

6. *Euph.* Tell me, Alciphron, are those abstract general ideas clear and distinct?

Alc. They are above all others clear and distinct, being the only proper object of science, which is altogether conversant about Universals.

Euph. And do you not think it very possible for any man to know whether he has this or that clear and distinct idea or no?

Alc. Doubtless. To know this

* [See Locke, *On Human Understanding*, Bk. IV. ch. 7.]—AUTHOR.

then inquire what it is? and see if we can make sense of our daily practice[1]. Words, it is agreed, are signs: it he needs only examine his own thoughts and look into his own mind.

Euph. But, upon looking into my own mind, I do not find that I have or can have these general abstract ideas of a man or a triangle above-mentioned, or of colour prescinded from all particular colours*. Though I shut mine eyes, and use mine utmost efforts, and reflect on all that passeth in my own mind, I find it utterly impossible to form such ideas.

Alc. To reflect with due attention and turn the mind inward upon itself is a difficult task, and not every one's talent.

Euph. Not to insist on what you allowed—that every one might easily know for himself whether he has this or that idea or no, I am tempted to think nobody else can form those ideas any more than I can. Pray, Alciphron, which are those things you would call *absolutely impossible*?

Alc. Such as include a contradiction.

Euph. Can you frame an idea of what includes a contradiction?

Alc. I cannot.

Euph. Consequently, whatever is absolutely impossible you cannot form an idea of?

Alc. This I grant.

Euph. But can a colour, or triangle, such as you describe their abstract general ideas, really exist?

Alc. It is absolutely impossible such things should exist in nature.

Euph. Should it not follow, then, that they cannot exist in your mind, or, in other words, that you cannot conceive or frame an idea of them?

Alc. You seem, Euphranor, not to distinguish between pure intellect and imagination†. Abstract general ideas I take to be the object of pure intellect, which may conceive them; although they cannot perhaps be imagined.

Euph. I do not perceive that I can by any faculty, whether of intellect or imagination, conceive or frame an idea of that which is impossible and includes a contradiction. And I am very much at a loss to account for your admitting that in common instances, which you would make an argument against Divine faith and mysteries.

7. *Alc.* There must be some mistake in this. How is it possible there should be general knowledge without general propositions, or these without general names, which

* [See the 'Introduction' to a *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, printed in the year 1710, where the absurdity of abstract ideas is fully considered.]—AUTHOR.

Cf. also *New Theory of Vision*, sect. 124, 125; *De Motu*, passim; and *Defence of Free-thinking in Mathematics*, sect. 45–48. Throughout his intellectual life he has been clinging to the concrete, and resisting the disposition to abstract from it.

† *νοήματα* and *φαντάσματα*, as the Greeks term the respective products of those faculties. Cf. Berkeley's *De Motu*, sect. 53, in which he distinguishes *pure intellect* and *imagination*.

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[1] Note that while the omitted sections (5–7) harmonise with those in the Introduction to the *Principles* (sect. 7–17) that are directed against

may not therefore be amiss to examine the use of other signs, in order to know that of words. Counters, for instance, at a card-table are used, not for their own sake, but only as signs substituted for money, as words are for ideas. Say now, Alciphron, is it necessary every time these counters are used throughout the progress of a game, to frame an *idea* of the distinct sum or value that each represents[1]?

Alc. By no means: it is sufficient the players first agree

cannot be without general ideas by standing for which they become general?

Euph. But may not words become general by being made to stand indiscriminately for all particular ideas, which, from a mutual resemblance, belong to the same kind; without the intervention of any abstract general idea?

Alc. Is there, then, no such thing as a general idea?

Euph. May we not admit *general ideas* though we should not admit them to be made by abstraction, or though we should not allow of *general abstract ideas*? To me it seems a particular idea may become general, by being used to stand for or represent other ideas; and that general knowledge is conversant about signs or general ideas made such by their signification; and which are considered rather in their relative capacity, and as substituted for others, than in their own nature, or for their own sake. A black line, for instance, an inch long, though in itself particular, may yet become universal, being used as a sign to stand for any line whatsoever.

Alc. It is your opinion, then, that words become general by representing an indefinite number of particular ideas?

Euph. It seems so to me.

Alc. Whenever, therefore, I hear a general name, it must be supposed to excite some one or other particular idea of that species in my mind?

Euph. I cannot say so neither. Pray, Alciphron, doth it seem to you necessary that, as often as the word *man* occurs in reading or discourse, you must form in your mind the idea of a particular man?

Alc. I own it doth not: and, not finding particular ideas always suggested by the words, I was led to think I had abstract general ideas suggested by them. And this is the opinion of all thinking men, who are agreed the only use of words is to suggest ideas. And indeed what other use can we assign them?]*'

* In the table of contents prefixed to this Dialogue, in the first and second editions, sections 5, 6, 7, now omitted in the text, appear thus:—

'5. Abstract ideas, what, and how made. 6. Abstract general ideas impossible. 7. In what sense there may be general ideas.'

'abstract ideas,' this and the following sections restate, and apply to the question about mysteries, the teaching of the remainder of the Introduction to the *Principles* (sect. 18–25), which treats of unreflecting employment of language, as a source of the empty abstractions which men mistake for concrete realities.

[1] 'an idea'—here a mental image or picture.

on their respective values, and at last substitute those values in their stead.

Euph. And in casting up a sum, where the figures stand for pounds, shillings, and pence, do you think it necessary, throughout the whole progress of the operation, in each step to form ideas of pounds, shillings, and pence?

Alc. I do not; it will suffice if in the conclusion those figures direct our actions with respect to things.

Euph. From hence it seems to follow, that words may not be insignificant, although they should not, every time they are used, excite the ideas they signify in our minds; it being sufficient that we have it in our power to substitute things or ideas [1] for their signs when there is occasion. It seems also to follow, that there may be another use of words besides that of marking and suggesting distinct ideas, to wit, the influencing our conduct and actions; which may be done either by forming rules for us to act by, or by raising certain passions, dispositions, and emotions in our minds. A discourse, therefore, that directs how to act or excite to the doing or forbearance of an action may, it seems, be useful and significant, although the words whereof it is composed should not bring each a distinct idea into our minds [2].

Alc. It seems so.

Euph. Pray tell me, Alciphron, is not an idea altogether inactive?

Alc. It is [3].

Euph. An agent therefore, an active mind, or spirit cannot be an idea, or like an idea. Whence it should seem to follow that those words which denote an active principle, soul, or spirit do not, in a strict and proper sense, stand for ideas. And yet they are not insignificant neither; since I understand what is signified by the term *I*, or *myself*, or know what it means: although it be no idea, or like an idea, but that which thinks, and wills, and apprehends

[1] 'things or ideas,' i. e. concrete data either of sense or of sensuous imagination, which the signs may denote, and which we *can* realise in imagination if we take the trouble.

[2] Cf. *Principles*, Introduction, sect. 20.

[3] Cf. *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 25; *De Motu*, sect. 22—in which, as elsewhere, the absolute powerlessness of sensible things is maintained, and causation is referred exclusively to Spirit.

ideas, and operates about them[1]. [[2]Certainly it must be allowed that we have some *notion*, and that we understand or know what is meant by, the terms *myself*, will, memory, love, hate, and so forth; although, to speak exactly, these words do not suggest so many distinct ideas.]

Alc. What would you infer from this?

Euph. What hath been inferred already—that words may be significant, although they do not stand for ideas[3]. The contrary whereof having been presumed seems to have produced the doctrine of abstract ideas.

Alc. Will you not allow then that the mind can abstract?

Euph. I do not deny it may abstract in a certain sense: inasmuch as those things that can really exist, or be really perceived asunder, may be conceived asunder, or abstracted one from the other; for instance, a man's head from his body, colour from motion, figure from weight. But it will not thence follow that the mind can frame abstract general ideas, which appear to be impossible[4].

Alc. And yet it is a current opinion that every substantive name marks out and exhibits to the mind one distinct idea separate from all others.

Euph. Pray, Alciphron, is not the word *number* such a substantive name?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Do but try now whether you can frame an idea of number in abstract; exclusive of all signs, words, and things numbered. I profess for my own part I cannot.

Alc. Can it be so hard a matter to form a simple idea of number, the object of a most evident demonstrable science? Hold, let me see if I cannot abstract the idea of number from the numerical names and characters, and all particular numerical things.—Upon which Alciphron paused awhile, and then said, To confess the truth I do not find that I can.

[1] Cf. *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 2, 26, 27. Spirit, in short, is something deeper than its ideas; which (especially ideas of sense) are ultimately beyond the control of finite spirits.

[2] The sentence in brackets was introduced in the third edition.

[3] [See the *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 135, and the 'Introduction,' sect. 20.]—AUTHOR.

[4] *Such* 'ideas' involve the contradiction of being at once empty abstractions and yet concrete objects; seeing that Berkeley still confines the term *idea* to what is concrete and sensuous.

Euph. But, though it seems neither you nor I can form distinct simple *ideas* of number, we can nevertheless make a very proper and significant *use* of *numeral names*. They direct us in the disposition and management of our affairs, and are of such necessary use, that we should not know how to do without them. And yet, if other men's faculties may be judged by mine, to obtain a precise simple abstract idea of number, is as difficult as to comprehend any mystery in religion[1].

6. But, to come to your own instance, let us examine what idea we can frame of *force*, abstracted from body, motion, and outward sensible effects. For myself I do not find that I have or can have any such idea.

Alc. Surely every one knows what is meant by force.

Euph. And yet I question whether every one can form a distinct idea of force. Let me entreat you, Alciphron, be not amused by terms: lay aside the *word* force, and exclude every other thing from your thoughts, and then see what precise *idea* you have of force.

Alc. Force is that in bodies which produces motion and other sensible effects.

Euph. Is it then something distinct from those effects?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Be pleased now to exclude the consideration of its subject and effects, and contemplate force itself in its own precise idea.

Alc. I profess I find it no such easy matter.

Euph. Take your own advice, and shut your eyes to assist your meditation.—Upon this, *Alciphron*, having closed his eyes and mused a few minutes, declared he could make nothing of it.

And that, replied *Euphranor*, which it seems neither you nor I can frame an idea of, by your own remark of men's minds and faculties being made much alike, we may suppose others have no more an idea of than we.

Alc. We may.

Euph. But, notwithstanding all this, it is certain there are many speculations, reasonings, and disputes, refined

[1] Cf. *De Motu*, sect. 7, 17, 18, 38, 39; also *Analyst*, sect. 7, 8, 47-50, in which the reasoning is similar.

subtilties, and nice distinctions about this same *force*[1]. And to explain its nature, and to distinguish the several notions or kinds of it, the terms *gravity, reaction, vis inertiæ, vis insita, vis impressa, vis mortua, vis viva, impetus, momentum, solicitatio, conatus,* and divers others such-like expressions, have been used by learned men: and no small controversies have arisen about the notions or definitions of these terms. It had puzzled men to know whether force is spiritual or corporeal; whether it remains after action; how it is transferred from one body to another. Strange paradoxes have been framed about its nature, properties, and proportions: for instance, that contrary forces may at once subsist in the same quiescent body: that the force of percussion in a small particle is infinite. For which, and other curiosities of the same sort, you may consult Borellus, *De Vi Percussionis,* the *Lezioni Academiche* of Torricelli, the *Exercitations* of Hermanus[2], and other writers. It is well known to the learned world what a controversy hath been carried on between mathematicians, particularly Monsieur Leibnitz and Monsieur Papin[3], in the Leipsic *Acta Eruditorum,* about the proportion of forces: whether they be each to other in a proportion compounded of the simple proportions of the bodies and the celerities, or in one compounded of the simple proportion of the bodies and the duplicate proportion of the celerities? A point, it seems, not yet agreed: as indeed the reality of the thing itself is made a question. Leibnitz distinguisheth between the *nisus elementaris,* and the *impetus* which is formed by a repetition of the *nisus elementaris,* and seems to think they do not exist in nature, but are made only by an abstraction of the mind. The same author, treating of original active force, to illustrate his subject, hath recourse to the substantial forms and *entelecheia* of Aristotle. And the ingenious Torricelli saith of force and impetus, that

[1] Cf. *De Motu,* sect. 8–20, and the notes, with what Euphranor says here.

[2] A German physician and natural philosopher in the seventeenth century.

[3] A French natural philosopher, who died in 1710 at Marburg, where he was professor of mathematics. He contributed on scientific subjects to the *Journal des Savans,* the *Philosophical Transactions,* and the *Acta Eruditorum* of Leipsic, and invented the apparatus known as 'Papin's digester.'

they are subtle abstracts and spiritual quintessences; and concerning the *momentum* and the velocity of heavy bodies falling, he saith they are *un certo che*, and *un non so che*; that is, in plain English, he knows not what to make of them. Upon the whole, therefore, may we not pronounce that—excluding body, time, space, motion, and all its sensible measures and effects[1]—we shall find it as difficult to form an idea of *force* as of *grace*[2]?

Alc. I do not know what to think of it.

7. *Euph.* And yet, I presume, you allow there are very evident propositions or theorems relating to force, which contain useful truths: for instance, that a body with conjunct forces describes the diagonal of a parallelogram, in the same time that it would the sides with separate. Is not this a principle of very extensive use? Doth not the doctrine of the composition and resolution of forces depend upon it; and, in consequence thereof, numberless rules and theorems directing men how to act, and explaining phenomena throughout the Mechanics and mathematical Philosophy? And if, by considering this doctrine of force, men arrive at the knowledge of many inventions in Mechanics, and are taught to frame engines, by means of which things difficult and otherwise impossible may be performed; and if the same doctrine which is so beneficial here below serveth also as a key to discover the nature of the celestial motions—shall we deny that it is of use, either in practice or speculation, because we have no distinct idea of force? Or that which we admit with regard to *force*, upon what pretence can we deny concerning *grace*? If there are queries, disputes, perplexities, diversity of notions and opinions about the one, so there are about the other also: if we can form no precise distinct idea of the one, so neither can we of the other. Ought we not therefore, by a parity of reason, to conclude there may be divers true and useful propositions concerning the one as well as the other? And that *grace* may be an object of our faith, and influence our life and actions, as

[1] i. e. excluding the phenomena given in sense; which form our concrete or real ideas of 'body, space, time, and motion.'

[2] This about *force* and *grace* is criticised in Bishop Browne's *Divine Analogy*, pp. 515 to the end.

a principle destructive of evil habits and productive of good ones, although we cannot attain a distinct *idea* of it, separate or abstracted from God the author, from man the subject, and from virtue and piety its effects[1]?

8. Shall we not admit the same method of arguing, the same rules of logic, reason, and good sense, to obtain in things spiritual and things corporeal, in faith and science? and shall we not use the same candour, and make the same allowances, in examining the revelations of God and the inventions of men? For aught I see, that philosopher cannot be free from bias and prejudice, or be said to weigh things in an equal balance, who shall maintain the doctrine of force and reject that of grace; who shall admit the abstract idea of a triangle, and at the same time ridicule the Holy Trinity[2]. But, however partial or prejudiced other minute philosophers might be, you have laid down for a maxim, that the same logic which obtains in other matters must be admitted in religion.

Lys. I think, Alciphron, it would be more prudent to abide by the way of wit and humour than thus to try religion by the dry test of reason and logic.

Alc. Fear not: by all the rules of right reason, it is absolutely impossible that *any* mystery, and least of all the Trinity, should really be the object of man's faith.

Euph. I do not wonder you thought so, as long as you maintained that no man could assent to a proposition without perceiving or framing in his mind distinct ideas marked by the terms of it. But, although terms are signs, yet, having granted that those signs may be significant though they should not suggest ideas represented by them, provided they serve to regulate and influence

[1] If it is true that (in the end) *omnia exeunt in mysteria*; that neither the world presented to the senses, nor the spiritual world, on which the former depends, can be at last fully stripped of all that is mysterious to imagination, it then follows that the mysteries embedded in Christianity form no more an *absolute* objection to its divinity than the mysteries in physical nature are a bar to faith in physical science, or ordinary experience. This is the argument which pervades the preceding and following applications of the general principle that is implied.

[2] The mystery of Triune Deity is Euphranor's next example of ultimate mystery inexplicable for man, in religion as in physical nature.

our wills, passions, and conduct, you have consequently granted that the mind of man may assent to propositions containing such terms, when it is so directed or affected by them; notwithstanding it should not perceive distinct ideas marked by those terms. Whence it seems to follow, that a man may believe the doctrine of the Trinity, if he finds it revealed in Holy Scripture that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are God, and that there is but one God, although he doth not frame in his mind any abstract or distinct ideas of trinity, substance, or personality; provided that this doctrine of a Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier makes proper impressions on his mind, producing therein love, hope, gratitude, and obedience, and thereby becomes a lively operative principle, influencing his life and actions, agreeably to that notion of saving faith which is required in a Christian. This, I say, whether right or wrong, seems to follow from your own principles and concessions. But, for further satisfaction, it may not be amiss to inquire whether there be anything parallel to this Christian faith in the minute philosophy. Suppose a fine gentleman or lady of fashion, who are too much employed to think for themselves, and are only free-thinkers at second-hand, have the advantage of being betimes initiated in the principles of your sect, by conversing with men of depth and genius, who have often declared it to be their opinion, the world is governed either by fate or by chance, it matters not which; will you deny it possible for such persons to yield their assent to either of these propositions?

Alc. I will not.

Euph. And may not such an assent be properly called *faith*?

Alc. It may.

Euph. And yet it is possible those disciples of the minute philosophy may not dive so deep as to be able to frame any abstract, or precise, or any determinate idea whatsoever, either of fate or of chance?

Alc. This too I grant.

Euph. So that, according to you, this same gentleman or lady may be said to believe or have faith where they have not ideas?

Alc. They may.

Euph. And may not this faith or persuasion produce real effects, and shew itself in the conduct and tenor of their lives, freeing them from the fears of superstition, and giving them a true relish of the world, with a noble indolence or indifference about what comes after?

Alc. It may.

Euph. And may not Christians, with equal reason, be allowed to believe the Divinity of our Saviour, or that in Him God and man make one Person, and be verily persuaded thereof, so far as for such faith or belief to become a real principle of life and conduct? inasmuch as, by virtue of such persuasion, they submit to His government, believe His doctrine, and practise His precepts; although they frame no abstract idea of the union between the Divine and human nature, nor may be able to clear up the notion of *person* to the contentment of a minute philosopher? To me it seems evident that if none but those who had nicely examined, and could themselves explain, the principle of Individuation in man, or untie the knots and answer the objections which may be raised even about human personal identity, would require of us to explain the Divine mysteries, we should not be often called upon for a clear and distinct idea of *person* in relation to the Trinity, nor would the difficulties on that head be often objected to our faith.

Alc. Methinks, there is no such mystery in *personal identity*.

Euph. Pray, in what do you take it to consist?

Alc. In consciousness[1].

Euph. Whatever is possible may be supposed?

Alc. It may.

Euph. We will suppose now (which is possible in the nature of things, and reported to be fact) that a person, through some violent accident or distemper, should fall into such a total oblivion as to lose all consciousness of his past life and former ideas. I ask, is he not still the same person?

Alc. He is the same man, but not the same person. Indeed you ought not to suppose that a *person* loseth its former consciousness, for this is impossible, though a *man*

[1] So Locke in his *Essay*, Bk. II. ch. 27, which compare with what follows; also ch. 1. §§ 9–19.

perhaps may; but then he becomes another person. In the same person, it must be owned, some old ideas may be lost, and some new ones got; but a total change is inconsistent with identity of person.

Euph. Let us then suppose that a person hath ideas and is conscious during a certain space of time, which we will divide into three equal parts, whereof the later terms are marked by the letters A, B, C. In the first part of time, the person gets a certain number of ideas, which are retained in A: during the second part of time, he retains one-half of his old ideas, and loseth the other half, in place of which he acquires as many new ones: so that in B his ideas are half old and half new. And in the third part, we will suppose him to lose the remainder of the ideas acquired in the first, and to get new ones in their stead, which are retained in C, together with those acquired in the second part of time. Is this a possible fair supposition?

Alc. It is.

Euph. Upon these premises, I am tempted to think one may demonstrate that personal identity doth not consist in consciousness.

Alc. As how?

Euph. You shall judge: but thus it seems to me. The persons in A and B are the same, being conscious of common ideas by supposition. The person in B is (for the same reason) one and the same with the person in C. Therefore, the person in A is the same with the person in C, by that undoubted axiom, *Quæ conveniunt uni tertio conveniunt inter se.* But the person in C hath no idea in common with the person in A. Therefore personal identity doth not consist in consciousness. What do you think, Alciphron, is not this a plain inference?

Alc. I tell you what I think: you will never assist my faith, by puzzling my knowledge.

9. *Euph.* There is, if I mistake not, a practical faith or assent, which sheweth itself in the will and actions of a man, although his understanding may not be furnished with those abstract, precise, distinct ideas, which, whatever a philosopher may pretend, are acknowledged to be above the talents of common men; among whom, nevertheless, may be found, even according to your own concession,

many instances of such practical faith, in other matters which do not concern religion. What should hinder, therefore, but that doctrines relating to heavenly mysteries might be taught, in this saving sense, to vulgar minds, which you may well think incapable of all teaching and faith, in the sense you suppose?

Which mistaken sense, said *Crito*, has given occasion to much profane and misapplied raillery. But all this may very justly be retorted on the minute philosophers themselves, who confound Scholasticism with Christianity, and impute to other men those perplexities, chimeras, and inconsistent ideas which are often the workmanship of their own brains, and proceed from their own wrong way of thinking. Who doth not see that such an ideal abstracted faith is never thought of by the bulk of Christians, husbandmen, for instance, artisans, or servants? Or what footsteps are there in the Holy Scripture to make us think that the wiredrawing of abstract ideas was a task enjoined either Jews or Christians? Is there anything in the law or the prophets, the evangelists or apostles, that looks like it? Every one whose understanding is not perverted by science falsely so-called may see the saving faith of Christians is quite of another kind, a vital operative principle, productive of charity and obedience [1].

Alc. What are we to think then of the disputes and decisions of the famous Council of Nice, and so many subsequent Councils? What was the intention of those venerable Fathers—the *homoousians* and the *homoiousians*? Why did they disturb themselves and the world with hard words, and subtle controversies?

Cri. Whatever their intention was, it could not be to beget nice abstracted ideas of mysteries in the minds of common Christians, this being evidently impossible. Nor doth it appear that the bulk of Christian men did in those days think it any part of their duty to lay aside the words, shut their eyes, and frame those abstract ideas; any more than men now do of force, time, number, or several other things, about which they nevertheless believe, know, argue, and dispute [2]. To me it seems that, whatever was the

[1] Cf. Berkeley's *Sermon before the S. P. G.*

[2] 'Si non rogas intelligo;' as has been said of the mysteries that are (for man) involved in unbeginning and unending duration.

source of these controversies, and howsoever they were managed, wherein human infirmity must be supposed to have had its share, the main end was not, on either side, to convey precise positive ideas to the minds of men, by the use of those contested terms, but rather a negative sense, tending to exclude Polytheism on the one hand, and Sabellianism on the other[1].

Alc. But what shall we say of so many learned and ingenious divines, who from time to time have obliged the world with new explications of mysteries, who, having themselves professedly laboured to acquire accurate ideas, would recommend their discoveries and speculations to others for articles of faith?

Cri. To all such innovators in religion I would say with Jerome, 'Why after so many centuries do you pretend to teach us what was untaught before? why explain what neither Peter nor Paul thought necessary to be explained[2]?' And it must be owned that the explication of mysteries in divinity, allowing the attempt as fruitless as the pursuit of the philosopher's stone in chemistry or the perpetual motion in mechanics, is no more than they chargeable on the profession itself, but only on the wrongheaded professors of it.

10. It seems, that what hath been now said may be applied to other mysteries of our religion. *Original sin*, for instance, a man may find it impossible to form an idea of in abstract, or of the manner of its transmission: and yet the belief thereof may produce in his mind a salutary sense of his own unworthiness, and the goodness of his Redeemer: from whence may follow good habits, and from them good actions, the genuine effects of faith; which, considered in its true light, is a thing neither repugnant nor incomprehensible, as some men would persuade us, but suited even to vulgar capacities; placed in the will and affections rather than in the understanding, and producing holy lives rather than subtle theories. Faith, I say, is not an indolent perception, but an operative persuasion of mind, which ever worketh some suitable action, dis-

[1] [Vid. Sozomen, Lib. II. cap. 8.] —AUTHOR.

[2] [Hieronym. (Jerome) *Ad Pammachium et Oceanum, de Erroribus Origenis.*]—AUTHOR.

position, or emotion in those who have it; as it were easy to prove and illustrate by innumerable instances taken from human affairs. And, indeed, while the Christian religion is considered an institution fitted to ordinary minds, rather than to the nicer talents, whether improved or puzzled, of speculative men; and our notions about faith are accordingly taken from the commerce of the world, and practice of mankind, rather than from the peculiar systems of refiners; it will, I think, be no difficult matter to conceive and justify the meaning and use of our belief of mysteries, against the most confident assertions and objections of the minute philosophers; who are easily to be caught in those very snares which they have spun and spread for others. And that humour of controversy, the mother and nurse of heresies, would doubtless very much abate, if it was considered that things are to be rated, not by colour, shape, or stamp, so truly as by the weight. If the moment of opinions had been by some litigious divines made the measure of their zeal, it might have spared much trouble both to themselves and others. Certainly one that takes his notions of faith, opinion, and assent from common sense, and common use, and has maturely weighed the nature of signs and language, will not be so apt to controvert the wording of a mystery, or to break the peace of the church, for the sake of retaining or rejecting a term.

[[1] But, to convince you by a plain instance of the efficacious necessary use of faith without ideas: we will suppose a man of the world, a minute philosopher, prodigal and rapacious, one of large appetites and narrow circumstances, who shall have it in his power at once to seize upon a great fortune by one villanous act, a single breach of trust, which he can commit with impunity and secretly. Is it not natural to suppose him arguing in this manner? All mankind in their senses pursue their interest. The interests of the present life are either of mind, body, or fortune. If I commit this fault my mind will be easy (having nought to fear here or hereafter); my bodily pleasure will be multiplied; and my fortune enlarged[2]. Suppose now, one of your refined theorists talks to him about the

[1] This paragraph was introduced in the second edition.
[2] Cf. Dial. II.

harmony of mind and affections, inward worth, truth of character, in one word, the beauty of virtue; which is the only interest he can propose to turn the scale against all other secular interests and sensual pleasures—would it not, think you, be a vain attempt[1]? [2] I say, in such a juncture what can the most plausible and refined philosophy of your sect offer to dissuade such a man from his purpose, more than assuring him that the abstracted delight of the mind, the enjoyments of an interior moral sense, the τὸ καλόν, are what constitute his true interest? And what effect can this have on a mind callous to all these things, and at the same time strongly affected with a sense of corporeal pleasures, and the outward interest, ornaments, and conveniences of life? Whereas that very man, do but produce in him a sincere belief of a Future State, although it be a mystery, although it be what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, he shall, nevertheless, by virtue of such belief, be withheld from executing his wicked project: and that for reasons which all men can comprehend, though nobody can be the object of them. I will allow the points insisted on by your refined moralists to be as lovely and excellent as you please to a reasonable, reflecting, philosophical mind. But I will venture to say that, as the world goes, few, very few, will be influenced by them[3]. We see, therefore, the necessary use, as well as the powerful effects of *faith*, even where we have not *ideas*.]

11. *Alc.* It seems, Euphranor, you would persuade me into an opinion, that there is nothing so singularly absurd as we are apt to think in the belief of mysteries; and that a man need not renounce his reason to maintain his religion. But, if this were true, how comes it to pass that, in proportion as men abound in knowledge, they dwindle in faith?

Euph. O Alciphron, I have learned from you that there is nothing like going to the bottom of things, and analysing

[1] Cf. Dial. III.

[2] The second edition here contains the following sentence:—On the other hand, possess him with a thorough belief or persuasion that he shall forfeit eternal happiness, or incur eternal misery; and this alone may suffice to turn the scale.

[3] Cf. Dial. IV.

them into their first principles. I shall therefore make an essay of this method, for clearing up the nature of faith: with what success, I shall leave you to determine; for I dare not pronounce myself, on my own judgment, whether it be right or wrong: but thus it seems to me. The objections made to faith are by no means an effect of knowledge, but proceed rather from an ignorance of what knowledge is; which ignorance may possibly be found even in those who pass for masters of this or that particular branch of knowledge. Science and faith agree in this, that they both imply an assent of the mind: and, as the nature of the first is most clear and evident, it should be first considered in order to cast a light on the other. To trace things from their original, it seems that the human mind, naturally furnished with the ideas of things particular and concrete, and being designed, not for the bare intuition[1] of ideas, but for action and operation about them, and pursuing her own happiness therein, stands in need of certain general rules or theorems to direct her operations in this pursuit; the supplying which want is the true, original, reasonable end of studying the arts and sciences. Now, these rules being general, it follows that they are not to be obtained by the mere consideration[1] of the original ideas, or particular things, but by the means of marks and signs; which, being so far forth universal, become the immediate instruments and materials of science. It is not, therefore, by mere contemplation of *particular things*, and much less of their *abstract* general ideas, that the mind makes her progress, but by an apposite choice and skilful management of signs:—for instance, *force* and *number*, taken in concrete, with their adjuncts, subjects, and signs, are what every one knows; and considered in abstract, so as making precise ideas of themselves, they are what nobody can comprehend. That their abstract nature, therefore, is not the foundation of science is plain: and that barely considering their ideas in concrete, is not the method to advance in the respective sciences is what every one that reflects may see: nothing being more evident than that one who can neither write nor read, in

[1] Note that Berkeley distinguishes an 'intuition' of a 'particular thing,' and a 'consideration' of 'marks and signs' in their application to an indefinite number of 'particular things.'

common use understands the meaning of numeral words, as well as the best philosopher or mathematician.

12. But here lies the difference: the one who understands the notation of numbers, by means thereof is able to express briefly and distinctly all the variety and degrees of number, and to perform with ease and dispatch several arithmetical operations by the help of general rules. Of all which operations as the use in human life is very evident, so it is no less evident that the performing them depends on the aptness of the notation. If we suppose rude mankind without the use of language, it may be presumed they would be ignorant of arithmetic. But the use of names, by the repetition whereof in a certain order they might express endless degrees of number, would be the first step towards that science. The next step would be, to devise proper marks of a permanent nature, and visible to the eye, the kind and order whereof must be chosen with judgment, and accommodated to the names. Which marking or notation would, in proportion as it was apt and regular, facilitate the invention and application of general rules to assist the mind in reasoning and judging, in extending, recording, and communicating its knowledge about numbers: in which theory and operations, the mind is immediately occupied about the signs or notes, by mediation of which it is directed to act about things, or number in concrete (as the logicians call it) without ever considering the simple, abstract, intellectual, general idea of number. [[1] The signs indeed do in their use imply relations or proportions of things: but these relations are not abstract general ideas, being founded in particular things, and not making of themselves distinct ideas to the mind exclusive of the particular ideas and the signs.] I imagine one need not think much to be convinced that the science of arithmetic, in its rise, operations, rules, and theorems, is altogether conversant about the artificial use of signs, names, and characters. These names and characters are universal, inasmuch as they are signs. The

[1] This important sentence was added in the third edition. It modifies the extreme nominalism of Berkeley's former language about 'abstract ideas,' by its recognition of *relations* latent in things; which it is the office of science to discover and express by signs.

names are referred to things, and the characters to names, and both to operation. The names being few, and proceeding by a certain analogy, the characters will be more useful, the simpler they are, and the more aptly they express this analogy. Hence the old notation by letters was more useful than words written at length. And the modern notation by figures, expressing the progression or analogy of the names by their simple places, is much preferable to that, for ease and expedition; as the invention of algebraical symbols is to this, for extensive and general use[1]. As arithmetic and algebra are sciences of great clearness, certainty, and extent, which are immediately conversant about signs, upon the skilful use and management whereof they entirely depend, so a little attention to them may possibly help us to judge of the progress of the mind in other sciences; which, though differing in nature, design, and object, may yet agree in the general methods of proof and inquiry.

13. If I mistake not, all sciences, so far as they are universal and demonstrable by human reason, will be found conversant about *signs* as their immediate object, though these in the application are referred to things[2]. The reason whereof is not difficult to conceive. For, as the mind is better acquainted with some sort of objects, which are earlier suggested to it, strike it more sensibly, or are more easily comprehended than others, it is naturally led to substitute those objects for such as are more subtile, fleeting, or difficult to conceive. Nothing, I say, is more natural, than to make the things we know a step towards those we do not know; and to explain and represent things less familiar by others which are more so. Now, it is certain we imagine before we reflect, and we perceive by sense before we imagine, and of all our senses the sight[3] is the most clear, distinct, various, agreeable, and comprehensive. Hence it is natural to assist the intellect by the imagination, the imagination by sense, and the other senses by sight. Hence figures, metaphors, and types. We

[1] Cf. Berkeley's *Arithmetica* and *Miscellanea Mathematica*, published in 1707.

[2] For they represent relations that are immanent in nature.

[3] Cf. *New Theory of Vision*—'Dedication.'

illustrate spiritual things by corporeal; we substitute sounds for thoughts, and written letters for sounds; emblems, symbols, and hieroglyphics, for things too obscure to strike, and too various or too fleeting to be retained. We substitute things imaginable for things intelligible, sensible things for imaginable, smaller things for those that are too great to be comprehended easily, and greater things for such as are too small to be discerned distinctly, present things for absent, permanent for perishing, and visible for invisible. Hence the use of models and diagrams. Hence right lines are substituted for time, velocity, and other things of very different natures. Hence we speak of spirits in a figurative style, expressing the operations of the mind by allusions and terms borrowed from sensible things, such as *apprehend, conceive, reflect, discourse*, and such-like: and hence those allegories which illustrate things intellectual by visions exhibited to the fancy. Plato, for instance, represents the mind presiding in her vehicle by the driver of a winged chariot, which sometimes moults and droops: and is drawn by two horses, the one good and of a good race, the other of a contrary kind; symbolically expressing the tendency of the mind towards the Divinity, as she soars or is borne aloft by two instincts like wings, the one in the Intellect towards truth, the other in the Will towards excellence, which instincts moult or are weakened by sensual inclinations; expressing also her alternate elevations and depressions, the struggles between reason and appetite, like horses that go an unequal pace, or draw different ways, embarrassing the soul in her progress to perfection[1]. I am inclined to think the doctrine of Signs a point of great importance, and general extent, which, if duly considered, would cast no small light upon Things, and afford a just and genuine solution of many difficulties[2].

[1] See Socrates in the *Phædrus* of Plato. Berkeley shews more affinity with Plato now than in his juvenile works.

[2] In Locke's *Essay*, Bk. IV. ch. 21, what he calls 'the doctrine of Signs' (σημειωτική) is represented as one of the 'three great provinces of the intellectual world'; the other two being concerned, one of them with outward Nature (φυσική), and the other with human Conduct (πρακτική). With Berkeley, in fact, the whole sensible universe is a system of interpretable signs, with their implied relations.

14. Thus much, upon the whole, may be said of all signs:—that they do not always suggest ideas signified to the mind: that when they suggest ideas, they are not general abstract ideas: that they have other uses besides barely standing for and exhibiting ideas—such as raising proper emotions, producing certain dispositions or habits of mind, and directing our actions in pursuit of that happiness which is the ultimate end and design, the primary spring and motive, that sets rational agents at work[1]: [[2] that signs may imply or suggest the relations of things; which relations, habitudes, or proportions as they cannot be by us understood without the help of signs, so being thereby expressed and corrected, they enable us to act with regard to things:] that the true end of speech, reason, science, faith, assent, in all its different degrees, is not merely, or principally, or always, the imparting or acquiring of ideas, but rather something of an active operative nature, tending to a conceived good: which may sometimes be obtained, not only although the ideas marked are not offered to the mind, but even although there should be no possibility of offering or exhibiting any such idea to the mind; for instance, the algebraic mark, which denotes the root of a negative square, hath its use in logistic operations, although it be impossible to form an idea of any such quantity. And what is true of algebraic signs is also true of words or language; modern algebra being in fact a more short, apposite, and artificial sort of language, and it being possible to express by words at length, though less conveniently, all the steps of an algebraical process[3]. And it must be confessed that even the mathematical sciences themselves, which above all others are reckoned the most clear and certain, if they are considered, not as instruments to direct our practice, but as speculations to employ our curiosity, will be found to fall short in many instances of those clear and distinct ideas, which, it seems, the minute philosophers of this age, whether knowingly or

[1] Cf. *Passive Obedience*, sect. 5. Accordingly in the Third Dialogue he objects to the 'abstract beauty' of virtue, apart from hope of happiness, as inadequate to move the mass of mankind to a virtuous life.

[2] Inserted in the third edition—again a limitation of extreme nominalism.

[3] So Dugald Stewart in his *Elements*—on 'Abstraction.'

ignorantly, expect and insist upon in the mysteries of religion[1].

15. Be the science or subject what it will, whensoever men quit particulars for generalities, things concrete for abstractions, when they forsake practical views, and the useful purposes of knowledge, for barren speculation, considering means and instruments as ultimate ends, and labouring to attain precise ideas which they suppose indiscriminately annexed to all terms, they will be sure to embarrass themselves with difficulties and disputes. Such are those which have sprung up in geometry about the nature of the angle of contact, the doctrine of proportions, of indivisibles, infinitesimals, and divers other points; notwithstanding all which, that science is very rightly esteemed an excellent and useful one, and is really found to be so in many occasions of human life, wherein it governs and directs the actions of men, so that by the aid or influence thereof those operations become just and accurate which would otherwise be faulty and uncertain. And, from a parity of reason, we should not conclude any other doctrines which govern, influence, or direct the mind of man to be, any more than that, the less true or excellent, because they afford matter of controversy, and useless speculation to curious and licentious wits: particularly those articles of our Christian faith, which, in proportion as they are believed, persuade, and, as they persuade, influence the lives and actions of men. As to the perplexity of contradictions and abstracted notions, in all parts whether of human science or Divine faith, cavillers may equally object, and unwary persons incur, while the judicious avoid it. There is no need to depart from the received rules of reasoning to justify the belief of Christians. And if any pious men think otherwise, it may be supposed an effect, not of religion, or of reason, but only of human weakness. If this age be singularly productive of infidels, I shall not therefore conclude it to be more knowing, but only more presuming, than former ages: and their conceit, I doubt, is not the effect of consideration.

[1] Berkeley's *Analyst* and his *Defence of Free-thinking in Mathematics*, published two years after *Alciphron*, expand and illustrate the thought contained in this sentence.

To me it seems that the more thoroughly and extensively any man shall consider and scan the principles, objects, and methods of proceeding in arts and sciences, the more he will be convinced there is no weight in those plausible objections that are made against the mysteries of faith; which it will be no difficult matter for him to maintain or justify in the received method of arguing, on the common principles of logic, and by numberless avowed parallel cases, throughout the several branches of human knowledge, in all which the supposition of abstract ideas creates the same difficulties.

[[1] *Alc.* According to this doctrine, all points may be alike maintained. There will be nothing absurd in Popery, not even transubstantiation.

Cri. Pardon me. This doctrine justifies no article of faith which is not contained in Scripture, or which is repugnant to human reason, which implies a contradiction, or which leads to idolatry or wickedness of any kind—all which is very different from our not having a distinct or an abstract idea of a point.]

16. *Alc.* I will allow, Euphranor, this reasoning of yours to have all the force you meant it should have. I freely own there may be mysteries; that we may believe where we do not understand; and that faith may be of use, although its object is not distinctly apprehended. In a word, I grant there may be faith and mysteries in other things, but not in religion: and that for this plain reason, because it is absurd to suppose there should be any such thing as religion; and, if there be no religion, it follows there cannot be religious faith or mysteries. Religion, it is evident, implies the worship of a God, which worship supposeth rewards and punishments, which suppose merits and demerits, actions good and evil, and these suppose *human liberty*[2], a thing impossible: and,

[1] This within brackets appeared first in the second edition.

[2] What follows (sect. 16–19), regarding free-will or moral agency in man, might have been suggested by the objections of Hobbes and Spinoza, but probably by the *Inquiry concerning Human Liberty* (1715) of Anthony Collins. It was the subject of a celebrated controversy between Collins and Samuel Clarke, as it had previously been between Clarke and Leibniz. See also Cato's *Letters* (at first subscribed Diogenes), and Jackson's *Defence of Liberty* (1725).

Clarke alleges as parallel, the evidence that *we are moral agents*,

consequently, religion, a thing built thereon, must be an unreasonable absurd thing. There can be no rational hopes or fears where there is no guilt; nor any guilt where there is nothing done but what unavoidably follows from the structure of the world and the laws of motion. Corporeal objects strike on the organs of sense, whence ensues a vibration in the nerves, which, being communicated to the soul or animal spirit in the brain or root of the nerves, produceth therein that motion called volition: and this produceth a new determination in the spirits, causing them to flow into such nerves as must necessarily by the laws of mechanism produce such certain actions. This being the case, it follows that those things which vulgarly pass for human actions are to be esteemed mechanical, and that they are falsely ascribed to a free principle. There is therefore no foundation for praise or blame, fear or hope, reward or punishment; nor consequently for religion, which, as I observed before, is built upon and supposeth those things.

Euph. You imagine, Alciphron, if I rightly understand you, that man is a sort of organ played on by outward objects, which, according to the different shape and texture of the nerves, produce different motions and effects therein.

Alc. Man may, indeed, be fitly compared to an organ: but a puppet is the very thing. You must know that certain particles, issuing forth in right lines from all sensible objects, compose so many rays, or filaments, which drive, draw, and actuate every part of the soul and body of man, just as threads or wires do the joints of that little wooden machine vulgarly called a *puppet*: with this only difference, that the latter are gross, and visible to common eyes, whereas the former are too fine and subtle to be discerned by any but a sagacious free-thinker. This admirably accounts for all those operations which we have been taught to ascribe to a thinking principle within us.

Euph. This is an ingenious thought, and must be of great use in freeing men from all anxiety about moral notions; as it transfers the principle of action from the

and the evidence that *the sensible world exists.* Neither, he says, can be demonstrated, yet neither can be doubted.

human soul to things outward and foreign[1]. But I have my scruples about it. For you suppose the mind in a literal sense to be moved, and its volitions to be mere motions. Now, if another should affirm, as it is not impossible some or other may, that the soul is incorporeal, and that motion is one thing and volition another[2], I would fain know how you could make your point clear to such a one. It must be owned very clear to those who admit the soul to be corporeal, and all her acts to be but so many motions. Upon this supposition, indeed, the light wherein you place human nature is no less true than it is fine and new. But, let any one deny this supposition, which is easily done, and the whole superstructure falls to the ground. If we grant the above-mentioned points, I will not deny a fatal necessity must ensue. But I see no reason for granting them. On the contrary, it seems plain that motion and thought are two things as really and as manifestly distinct as a triangle and a sound[2]. It seems, therefore, that, in order to prove the necessity of human actions, you suppose what wants proof as much as the very point to be proved.

17. *Alc.* But, supposing the mind incorporeal, I shall, nevertheless, be able to prove my point. Not to amuse you with far-fetched arguments, I shall only desire you to look into your own breast and observe how things pass there, when an object offers itself to the mind. First, the understanding considers it: in the next place, the judgment decrees about it, as a thing to be chosen or rejected, to be omitted or done, in this or that manner: and this decree of the judgment doth necessarily determine the will, whose office is merely to execute what is ordained by another faculty: consequently, there is no such thing as freedom of the will. For, that which is necessary cannot be free. In freedom there should be an indifference to either side of the question, a power to act or not to act, without prescription or control: and without this indifference and this power, it is evident the will cannot be free. But it is no less evident that the will is not indifferent in its actions, being absolutely determined and governed by the judgment.

[1] It issues either in an unmoral Pantheism, or an unmoral Atheism.
[2] See *De Motu*, sect. 3-42.

Now, whatever moves the judgment, whether the greatest present uneasiness, or the greatest apparent good, or whatever else it be, it is all one to the point in hand. The will, being ever concluded and controlled by the judgment, is in all cases alike under necessity. There is, indeed, throughout the whole of human nature, nothing like a principle of freedom, every faculty being determined in all its acts by something foreign to it. The understanding, for instance, cannot alter its idea, but must necessarily see it such as it presents itself. The appetites by a natural necessity are carried towards their respective objects. Reason cannot infer indifferently anything from anything, but is limited by the nature and connexion of things, and the eternal rules of reasoning. And, as this is confessedly the case of all other faculties, so it equally holds with respect to the will itself, as hath been already shewn. And, if we may credit the divine Characteriser of our times, this above all others must be allowed the most slavish faculty. 'Appetite (saith that noble writer[1]), which is elder brother to Reason, being the lad of stronger growth, is sure, on every contest, to take the advantage of drawing all to his own side. And Will, so highly boasted, is but at best a foot-ball or top between these youngsters, who prove very unfortunately matched; till the youngest, instead of now and then a kick or lash bestowed to little purpose, forsakes the ball or top itself, and begins to lay about his elder brother.'

Cri. This beautiful parable for style and manner might equal those of a known English writer in low life, renowned for allegory[2], were it not a little incorrect, making the weaker lad find his account in laying about the stronger.

Alc. This is helped up by supposing the stronger lad the greater coward. But, be that as it will, so far as it relates to the point in hand, this is a clear state of the case.

The same point may be also proved from the prescience of God. That which is certainly foreknown will certainly be. And what is certain is necessary. And necessary actions cannot be the effect of free-will. Thus you have

[1] Shaftesbury. See *Characteristics*, vol. I. p. 187.
[2] John Bunyan (?).

this fundamental point of our free-thinking philosophy demonstrated different ways.

Euph. Tell me, Alciphron, do you think it implies a contradiction that God should make a man free?

Alc. I do not.

Euph. It is then possible there may be such a thing?

Alc. This I do not deny.

Euph. You can therefore conceive and suppose such a free agent?

Alc. Admitting that I can; what then?

Euph. Would not such a one think that he acted?

Alc. He would.

Euph. And condemn himself for some actions, and approve himself for others?

Alc. This too I grant.

Euph. Would he not think he deserved reward or punishment?

Alc. He would.

Euph. And are not all these characters actually found in man?

Alc. They are.

Euph. Tell me now, what other character of your supposed free agent may not actually be found in man? For, if there is none such, we must conclude that man hath all the marks of a free agent.

Alc. Let me see! I was certainly overseen in granting it possible, even for Almighty power, to make such a thing as a free agent. I wonder how I came to make such an absurd concession, after what had been, as I observed before, demonstrated so many different ways.

Euph. [[1] Certainly whatever is possible may be supposed: and whatever doth not imply a contradiction is possible to an Infinite Power: therefore, if a natural agent implieth no contradiction, such a being may be supposed. Perhaps, from this supposition, I might infer man to be free. But I will not suppose him that free agent; since, it seems, you pretend to have demonstrated the contrary.] O Alciphron! it is vulgarly observed that men judge of others by themselves. But, in judging of me by this rule, you may be mistaken. Many things are plain to one of your sagacity,

[1] The sentences within brackets were introduced in the second edition.

which are not so to me, who am often bewildered rather than enlightened by those very proofs that with you pass for clear and evident. And, indeed, be the inference never so just, yet, so long as the premises are not clear, I cannot be thoroughly convinced. You must give me leave therefore to propose some questions, the solution of which may perhaps shew what at present I am not able to discern.

Alc. I shall leave what hath been said with you, to consider and ruminate upon. It is now time to set out on our journey: there is, therefore, no room for a long string of question and answer.

18. *Euph.* I shall then only beg leave, in a summary manner, to make a remark or two on what you have advanced. In the first place, I observe you take that for granted which I cannot grant, when you assert whatever is certain the same to be necessary. To me, certain and necessary seem very different; there being nothing in the former notion that implies constraint, nor consequently which may not consist with a man's being accountable for his actions. If it is foreseen that such an action shall be done, may it not also be foreseen that it shall be an effect of human choice[1] and liberty? In the next place, I observe that you very nicely abstract and distinguish the actions of the mind, judgment, and will: that you make use of such terms as power, faculty, act, determination, indifference, freedom, necessity, and the like, as if they stood for distinct abstract ideas: and that this supposition seems to ensnare the mind into the same perplexities and errors, which, in all other instances, are observed to attend the doctrine of abstraction. It is self-evident that there is such a thing as motion: and yet there have been found philosophers, who, by refined reasoning, would undertake to prove that there was no such thing. *Walking before them* was thought the proper way to confute those ingenious men[2]. It is no less evident that man is a free agent: and though, by abstracted reasonings, you would puzzle me, and seem to prove the contrary, yet, so long as

[1] But can the 'choice' be foreseen if it is an unconditioned act?

[2] *Solvitur ambulando* and *si non rogas, intelligo*, are human ways of disposing of ultimate questions.

I am conscious [1] of my own actions, this inward evidence of plain fact will bear me up against all your reasonings, however subtle and refined. The confuting plain points by obscure ones may perhaps convince me of the ability of your philosophers, but never of their tenets. I cannot conceive why the acute Cratylus [2] should suppose a power of acting in the appetite and reason, and none at all in the will? Allowing, I say, the distinction of three such beings in the mind, I do not see how this could be true. But, if I cannot abstract and distinguish so many beings in the soul of man so accurately as you do, I do not find it necessary; since it is evident to me, in the gross and concrete, that I am a free agent. Nor will it avail to say, the will is governed by the judgment, or determined by the object, while, in every sudden common cause, I cannot discern nor abstract the decree of the judgment from the command of the will; while I know the sensible object to be absolutely inert: and lastly, while I am conscious that I am an active being, who can and do determine myself. If I should suppose things spiritual to be corporeal, or refine things actual and real into general abstracted notions, or by metaphysical skill split things simple and individual into manifold parts, I do not know what may follow. But, if I take things as they are, and ask any plain untutored man, whether he acts or is free in this or that particular action, he readily assents, and I as readily believe him—from what I find within. And thus, by an induction of particulars, I may conclude man to be a free agent, although I may be puzzled to define or conceive a notion of freedom in general and abstract. And if man be free, he is plainly accountable. But, if you shall define, abstract, suppose, and it shall follow that, according to your definitions, abstractions, and suppositions, there can be no freedom in man, and you shall thence infer that he is not accountable, I shall make bold to depart from your metaphysical Abstracted Sense, and appeal to the Common Sense of mankind.

[1] Berkeley appeals throughout to consciousness and enlightened common sense, on behalf both of moral agency in man, and of the dependent existence of sensible things. Is not conscience or moral reason at the root of consciousness in the former of those convictions?

[2] Shaftesbury.

19. If we consider the notions that obtain in the world of guilt and merit, praise and blame, accountable and unaccountable, we shall find the common question, in order to applaud or censure, acquit or condemn a man, is, whether *he* did such an action? and whether he was *himself* when he did it? which comes to the same thing. It should seem, therefore, that, in the ordinary commerce of mankind, any person is esteemed accountable simply as he is an agent. And, though you should tell me that man is inactive, and that the sensible objects act upon him, yet my own experience assures me of the contrary. I know I act: and what I act I am accountable for. And, if this be true, the foundation of religion and morality remains unshaken. Religion, I say, is concerned no further than that man should be accountable: and this he is, according to my sense, and the common sense of the world, if he acts; and that he doth act is self-evident. The grounds, therefore, and ends of religion are secured, whether your philosophic notion of liberty agrees with man's actions or no; and whether his actions are certain or contingent: the question being not whether he did it with a free will? or what determined his will? not, whether it was certain or foreknown that he would do it? but only, whether he did it *wilfully*? as what must entitle him to the guilt or merit of it.

Alc. But still, the question recurs, whether man be free?

Euph. To determine this question, ought we not at first to determine what is meant by the word *free*?

Alc. We ought.

Euph. In my opinion, a man is said to be free, so far forth as he can do what he will. Is this so, or is it not?

Alc. It seems so.

Euph. Man, therefore, acting according to his will, is to be accounted free.

Alc. This I admit to be true in the vulgar sense. But a philosopher goes higher, and inquires whether man be free to will?

Euph. That is, whether he can will as he wills? I know not how philosophical it may be to ask this question, but it seems very unintelligible[1]. The notions of guilt and

[1] After all it *is* the question, which concerns not the *effects* of our volitions, but their *source*. Do they originate in the agent abso-

merit, justice and reward, are in the minds of men antecedent to all metaphysical disquisitions; and, according to those received natural notions, it is not doubted that man is accountable, that he acts, and is self-determined.

20. But a minute philosopher shall, in virtue of wrong suppositions, confound things most evidently distinct; body, for instance, with spirit; motion with volition; certainty with necessity. And an abstractor or refiner shall so analyse the most simple instantaneous act of the mind as to distinguish therein divers faculties and tendencies, principles and operations, causes and effects; and, having abstracted, supposed, and reasoned upon principles, gratuitous and obscure, he will conclude it is no act at all; and man no agent, but a puppet, or an organ played on by outward objects, and his will a top or a foot-ball. And this passeth for philosophy and free-thinking. Perhaps this may be what it passeth for, but it by no means seems a natural or just way of thinking. To me it seems that, if we begin from things particular and concrete, and thence proceed to general notions and conclusions, there will be no difficulty in this matter. But, if we begin with generalities, and lay our foundation in abstract ideas, we shall find ourselves entangled and lost in a labyrinth of our own making. I need not observe, what every one must see, the ridicule of proving man no agent[1], and yet pleading for free thought and action—of setting up at once for advocates of liberty and necessity. I have hastily thrown together these hints or remarks, on what you call a fundamental article of the minute philosophy, and your method of proving it, which seems to furnish an admirable specimen of the sophistry of abstract ideas. If, in this summary way, I have been more dogmatical than became me, you must excuse what you

lutely, so that he only is responsible for them, or are they merely terms in natural sequences? And it is the practical fact of moral liberty, not its metaphysical formula, that Berkeley is anxious about. He rejects as absurd the hypothesis that each volition is naturally caused by a previous volition; and accepts the unique fact of free *activity*, contained in our concrete spiritual experience, and implied in the belief of responsibility on which social life turns.

[1] 'agent'—all real action being voluntary.

occasioned, by declining a joint and leisurely examination of the truth.

Alc. I think we have examined matters sufficiently.

Cri. To all you have said against human liberty, it is a sufficient answer to observe that your arguments proceed upon an erroneous supposition, either of the soul's being corporeal, or of abstract ideas. [[1] Not to mention other gross mistakes and gratuitous principles. You might as well suppose that the soul is red or blue as that it is solid. You might as well make the will anything else as motion. And whatever you infer from such premises, which (to speak in the softest manner) are neither proved nor probable, I make no difficulty to reject. You distinguish in all human actions between the last degree of the judgment and the act of the will. You confound certainty with necessity: you inquire, and your inquiry amounts to an absurd question—whether man can will as he wills? As evidently true as is this identical proposition, so evidently false must that way of thinking be which led you to make a question of it. [[2] You say the appetites have by necessity of nature a tendency towards their respective objects. This we grant; and withal that appetite, if you please, is not free. But you go further, and tell us that the understanding cannot alter its idea, nor infer indifferently anything from anything. What then? Can we not act at all, if we cannot alter the nature of objects, and may we not be free in other things, if we are not at liberty to make absurd inferences?] You take for granted that the mind is inactive, but that its ideas act upon it: as if the contrary were not evident to every man of common sense, who cannot but know that it is the mind which considers its ideas, chooses, rejects, examines, deliberates, decrees, in a word acts about them, and not they about it. Upon the whole, your premises being obscure and false, the fundamental point, which you pretend to demonstrate so many different ways, proves neither sense nor truth in any.] And, on the other hand, there is not need of much inquiry to be convinced of two points, than which none are more evident, more obvious, and more universally admitted by men of all sorts, learned or unlearned, in all

[1] The passage within brackets (except the part related to note 2) was inserted in the second edition.

[2] Introduced in the *third* edition.

times and places, to wit, that man acts, and is accountable for his actions. Whatever abstracters, refiners, or men prejudiced to a false hypothesis may pretend, it is, if I mistake not, evident to every thinking man of common sense, that human minds are so far from being engines or footballs, acted upon and bandied about by corporeal objects, without any inward principle of freedom or action, that the only original true notions that we have of *freedom*, *agent*, or *action* are obtained by reflecting on ourselves, and the operations of our own minds[1]. The singularity and credulity of minute philosophers, who suffer themselves to be abused by the paralogisms of three or four eminent patriarchs of infidelity in the last age, is, I think, not to be matched; there being no instance of bigoted superstition the ringleaders whereof have been able to seduce their followers more openly and more widely from the plain dictates of nature and common sense.

21. *Alc.* It has been always an objection against the discoverers of truth, that they depart from received opinions. The character of singularity is a tax on free-thinking: and as such we most willingly bear it, and glory in it. A genuine philosopher is never modest in a false sense, to the preferring authority before reason, or an old and common opinion before a true one. Which false modesty, as it discourages men from treading in untrodden paths, or striking out new light, is, above all other qualities, the greatest enemy to free-thinking.

Cri. Authority in disputable points will have its weight with a judicious mind, which yet will follow evidence wherever it leads. Without preferring, we may allow it a good second to reason. Your gentlemen, therefore, of the minute philosophy may spare a word of common-place upon reason, and light, and discoveries. We are not attached to authority against reason, nor afraid of untrodden paths that lead to truth, and are ready to follow a new light when we are sure it is no *ignis fatuus*. Reason may oblige a man to believe against his inclinations: but

[1] Berkeley virtually attributes our faith in originative causation ultimately to our experience of morally responsible agency. Accordingly, the causal principle involves reference of all change in the universe to Will or Active Reason. Cf. *De Motu*, and *Siris*, passim.

why should a man quit salutary notions for others not less unreasonable than pernicious? Your schemes, and principles, and boasted demonstrations have been at large proposed and examined. You have shifted your notions, successively retreated from one scheme to another, and in the end renounced them all. Your objections have been treated in the same manner, and with the same event. If we except all that relates to the errors and faults of particular persons, and difficulties which, from the nature of things, we are not obliged to explain; it is surprising to see, after such magnificent threats, how little remains that can amount to a pertinent objection against the Christian religion. What you have produced has been tried by the fair test of reason; and though you should hope to prevail by ridicule when you cannot by reason, yet, in the upshot, I apprehend you will find it impracticable to destroy all sense of religion. Make your countrymen ever so vicious, ignorant, and profane; men will still be disposed to look up to a Supreme Being. Religion, right or wrong, will subsist in some shape or other, and some worship there will surely be either of God or the creature. As for your ridicule, can anything be more ridiculous than to see the most unmeaning men of the age set up for free-thinkers, men so strong in assertion, and yet so weak in argument; advocates for freedom introducing a fatality; patriots trampling on the laws of their country; and pretenders to virtue destroying the motives of it? Let any impartial man but cast an eye on the opinions of the minute philosophers, and then say if anything can be more ridiculous than to believe such things and at the same time laugh at credulity.

22. *Lys.* Say what you will, we have the laughers on our side; and as for your reasoning I take it to be another name for sophistry.

Cri. And I suppose by the same rule you take your own sophisms for arguments. To speak plainly, I know no sort of sophism that is not employed by minute philosophers against religion. They are guilty of a *petitio principii*, in taking for granted that we believe contradictions; of *non causa pro causa*, in affirming that uncharitable feuds and discords are the effects of Christianity; of *ignoratio elenchi*,

in expecting demonstrations where we pretend only to faith. If I were not afraid to offend the delicacy of polite ears, nothing were easier than to assign instances of every kind of sophism, which would shew how skilful your own philosophers are in the practice of that sophistry you impute to others.

Euph. For my own part, if sophistry be the art or faculty of deceiving other men, I must acquit these gentlemen of it. They seem to have led me a progress through atheism, libertinism, enthusiasm, fatalism, not to convince me of the truth of any of them, so much as to confirm me in my own way of thinking. They have exposed their fairy ware not to cheat but divert us. As I know them to be professed masters of ridicule, so in a serious sense I know not what to make of them.

Alc. You do not know what to make of us! I should be sorry you did. He must be a superficial philosopher that is soon fathomed.

23. *Cri.* The ambiguous character is, it seems, the sure way to fame and esteem in the learned world, as it stands constituted at present. When the ingenious reader is at a loss to determine whether his author be atheist or deist or polytheist, stoic or epicurean, sceptic or dogmatist, infidel or enthusiast, in jest or in earnest, he concludes him without hesitation to be enigmatical and profound. In fact, it is true of the most admired writers of the age, that no man alive can tell what to make of them, or what they would be at.

Alc. We have among us moles that dig deep under ground, and eagles that soar out of sight. We can act all parts and become all opinions, putting them on or off with great freedom of wit and humour.

Euph. It seems then you are a pair of inscrutable, unfathomable, fashionable philosophers.

Lys. It cannot be denied.

Euph. But, I remember, you set out with an open dogmatical air, and talked of plain principles, and evident reasoning, promised to make things as clear as noonday, to extirpate wrong notions and plant right in their stead. Soon after, you began to recede from your first notions, and adopt others; you advanced one while and retreated

another, yielded and retracted, said and unsaid. And after having followed you through so many untrodden paths and intricate mazes I find myself never the nearer.

Alc. Did we not tell you the gentlemen of our sect are great proficients in raillery?

Euph. But, methinks, it is a vain attempt for a plain man of any settled belief or principles, to engage with such slippery, fugitive, changeable philosophers. It seems as if a man should stand still in the same place, while his adversary chooses and changes his situation, has full range and liberty to traverse the field, and attack him on all sides and in all shapes, from a nearer or further distance, on horseback or on foot, in light or heavy armour, in close fight or with missive weapons.

Alc. It must be owned, a gentleman hath great advantage over a strait-laced pedant or bigot.

Euph. But, after all, what am I the better for the conversation of two such knowing gentlemen? I hoped to have unlearned my errors, and to have learned truths from you, but, to my great disappointment, I do not find that I am either untaught or taught.

Alc. To unteach men their prejudices is a difficult task; and this must first be done, before we can pretend to teach them the truth. Besides, we have at present no time to prove and argue.

Euph. But suppose my mind white paper; and, without being at any pains to extirpate my opinions, or prove your own, only say what you would write thereon, or what you would teach me in case I were teachable. Be for once in earnest, and let me know some one conclusion of yours before we part; or I shall entreat Crito to violate the laws of hospitality towards those who have violated the laws of philosophy, by hanging out false lights to one benighted in ignorance and error. I appeal to you (said he, turning to Crito), whether these philosophical knight-errants should not be confined in this castle of yours, till they make reparation.

Euphranor has reason, said *Crito*, and my sentence is, that you remain here in durance till you have done something towards satisfying the engagement I am under—having promised, he should know your opinions from yourselves, which you also agreed to.

24. *Alc.* Since it must be so, I will now reveal what I take to be the sum and substance, the grand arcanum and ultimate conclusion of our sect, and that in two words—ΠΑΝΤΑ ΥΠΟΛΗΨΙΣ.

Cri. You are then a downright sceptic. But, sceptic as you are, you own it probable there is a God, certain that the Christian religion is useful, possible it may be true, certain that, if it be, the minute philosophers are in a bad way. This being the case, how can it be questioned what course a wise man should take? Whether the principles of Christians or infidels are truest may be made a question; but which are safest can be none. Certainly if you doubt of all opinions you must doubt of your own; and then, for aught you know, the Christian may be true. The more doubt the more room there is for faith, a sceptic of all men having the least right to demand evidence. But, whatever uncertainty there may be in other points, thus much is certain:—either there is or is not a God: there is or is not a revelation: man either is or is not an agent: the soul is or is not immortal. If the negatives are not sure, the affirmatives are possible. If the negatives are improbable, the affirmatives are probable. In proportion as any of your ingenious men finds himself unable to prove any one of these negatives, he hath grounds to suspect he may be mistaken. A minute philosopher, therefore, that would act a consistent part, should have the diffidence, the modesty, and the timidity, as well as the doubts of a sceptic; not pretend to an ocean of light, and then lead us to an abyss of darkness. If I have any notion of ridicule, this is most ridiculous. But your ridiculing what, for aught you know, may be true, I can make no sense of. It is neither acting as a wise man with regard to your own interest, nor as a good man with regard to that of your country.

25. Tully saith somewhere, *Aut undique religionem tolle, aut usquequaque conserva*: Either let us have no religion at all, or let it be respected. If any single instance can be shewn of a people that ever prospered without some religion, or if there be any religion better than the Christian, propose it in the grand assembly of the nation to change our constitution, and either live without religion, or in-

troduce that new religion. A sceptic, as well as other men, is member of a community, and can distinguish between good and evil, natural or political. Be this then his guide as a patriot, though he be no Christian. Or, if he doth not pretend even to this discernment, let him not pretend to correct or alter what he knows nothing of: neither let him that only doubts behave as if he could demonstrate. Timagoras is wont to say, I find my country in possession of certain tenets; they appear to have a useful tendency, and as such are encouraged by the legislature; they make a main part of our constitution; I do not find these innovators can disprove them, or substitute things more useful and certain in their stead: out of regard therefore to the good of mankind and the laws of my country, I shall acquiesce in them. I do not say Timagoras is a Christian, but I reckon him a patriot. Not to inquire in a point of so great concern is folly, but it is still a higher degree of folly to condemn without inquiring.

Lysicles seemed heartily tired of this conversation. It is now late, said he to Alciphron, and all things are ready for our departure. Every one hath his own way of thinking; and it is as impossible for me to adopt another man's as to make his complexion and features mine.

Alciphron pleaded that, having complied with Euphranor's conditions, they were now at liberty: and *Euphranor* answered that, all he desired having been to know their tenets, he had nothing further to pretend.

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26. The philosophers being gone, I observed to Crito how unaccountable it was that men so easy to confute should yet be so difficult to convince.

This, said *Crito*, is accounted for by Aristotle, who tells us that arguments have not an effect on all men, but only on them whose minds are prepared by education and custom, as land is for seed[1]. Make a point never so clear, it is great odds that a man whose habits and the bent of whose mind lie in a contrary way shall be unable to comprehend it. So weak a thing is reason in competition with inclination.

I replied, This answer might hold with respect to other

[1] [*Ethic. ad Nicom.* Lib. X. cap. 9.]—Author.

persons and other times; but when the question was of inquisitive men, in an age wherein reason was so much cultivated, and thinking so much in vogue, it did not seem satisfactory.

I have known it remarked, said *Crito*, by a man of much observation, that in the present age thinking is more talked of but less practised than in ancient times; and that since the revival of learning men have read much and wrote much, but thought little: insomuch that with us to think closely and justly is the least part of a learned man, and none at all of a polite man. The free-thinkers, it must be owned, make great pretensions to thinking, and yet they shew but little exactness in it. A lively man, and what the world calls a man of sense, are often destitute of this talent; which is not a mere gift of nature, but must be improved and perfected by much attention and exercise on very different subjects; a thing of more pains and time than the hasty men of parts in our age care to take. Such were the sentiments of a judicious friend of mine. And if you are not already sufficiently convinced of these truths, you need only cast an eye on the dark and confused, but nevertheless admired, writers of this famous sect; and then you will be able to judge whether those who are led by men of such wrong heads can have very good ones of their own. Such, for instance, was Spinosa, the great leader of our modern infidels, in whom are to be found many schemes and notions much admired and followed of late years:—such as undermining religion under the pretence of vindicating and explaining it: the maintaining it not necessary to believe in Christ according to the flesh: the persuading men that miracles are to be understood only in a spiritual and allegorical sense: that vice is not so bad a thing as we are apt to think: that men are mere machines impelled by fatal necessity.

I have heard, said I, Spinosa represented as a man of close argument and demonstration.

He did, replied *Crito*, demonstrate; but it was after such a manner as any one may demonstrate anything. Allow a man the privilege to make his own definitions of common words, and it will be no hard matter for him to infer conclusions which in one sense shall be true and in another false, at once seeming paradoxes and manifest

truisms. For example, let but Spinosa define natural right to be natural power, and he will easily demonstrate that 'whatever a man can do' he hath a right to do[1]. Nothing can be plainer than the folly of this proceeding: but our pretenders to the *lumen siccum* are so passionately prejudiced against religion, as to swallow the grossest nonsense and sophistry of weak and wicked writers for demonstration.

27. And so great a noise do these men make, with their thinking, reasoning, and demonstrating, as to prejudice some well-meaning persons against all use and improvement of reason. Honest Demea, having seen a neighbour of his ruined by the vices of a free-thinking son, contracted such a prejudice against thinking that he would not suffer his own to read Euclid, being told it might teach him to think; till a friend convinced him the epidemical distemper was not thinking, but only the want and affectation of it. I know an eminent free-thinker who never goes to bed without a gallon of wine in his belly, and is sure to replenish before the fumes are off his brain, by which means he has not had one sober thought these seven years; another, that would not for the world lose the privilege and reputation of free-thinking, who games all night, and lies in bed all day: and as for the outside or appearance of thought in that meagre minute philosopher Ibycus, it is an effect, not of thinking, but of carking, cheating, and writing in an office. Strange, said he, that such men should set up for free-thinkers! But it is yet more strange that other men should be out of conceit with thinking and reasoning, for the sake of such pretenders.

I answered, that some good men conceived an opposition between reason and religion, faith and knowledge, nature and grace; and that, consequently, the way to promote religion was to quench the light of nature and discourage all rational inquiry.

28. How right the intentions of these men may be, replied *Crito*, I shall not say; but surely their notions are

[1] [*Tractat. Polit.* cap. 2.]—AUTHOR. Spinoza was imperfectly understood when Berkeley wrote.

very wrong. Can anything be more dishonourable to religion than the representing it as an unreasonable, unnatural, ignorant institution? God is the Father of all lights, whether natural or revealed. Natural concupiscence is one thing, and the light of nature another. You cannot therefore argue from the former against the latter: neither can you from science, falsely so called, against real knowledge. Whatever, therefore, is said of the one in Holy Scripture is not to be interpreted of the other.

I insisted that human learning in the hands of divines had, from time to time, created great disputes and divisions in the church.

As abstracted metaphysics, replied *Crito*, have always a tendency to produce disputes among Christians, as well as other men, so it should seem that genuine truth and knowledge would allay this humour, which makes men sacrifice the undisputed duties of peace and charity to disputable notions [1].

After all, said I, whatever may be said for reason, it is plain the sceptics and infidels of the age are not to be cured by it.

I will not dispute this point, said *Crito*: in order to cure a distemper, you should consider what produced it. Had men reasoned themselves into a wrong opinion, one might hope to reason them out of it. But this is not the case; the infidelity of most minute philosophers seeming an effect of very different motives from thought and reason. Little incidents, vanity, disgust, humour, inclination, without the least assistance from reason, are often known to make infidels. Where the general tendency of a doctrine is disagreeable, the mind is prepared to relish and improve everything that with the least pretence seems to make against it. Hence the coarse manners of a country curate, the polite manners of a chaplain, the wit of a minute philosopher, a jest, a song, a tale can serve instead of a reason for infidelity. Bupalus preferred a rake in the church, and then made use of him as an argument against it. Vice, indolence, faction, and fashion produce minute philosophers, and mere petulancy not a few. Who then can expect a thing so irrational and capricious should yield

[1] Berkeley's life was a struggle against 'abstracted metaphysics.'

to reason[1]? It may, nevertheless, be worth while to argue against such men, and expose their fallacies, if not for their own sake, yet for the sake of others; as it may lessen their credit, and prevent the growth of their sect, by removing a prejudice in their favour, which sometimes inclines others as well as themselves to think they have made a monopoly of human reason.

29. The most general pretext which looks like reason is taken from the variety of opinions about religion. This is a resting-stone to a lazy and superficial mind. But one of more spirit and a juster way of thinking makes it a step whence he looks about, and proceeds to examine, and compare the differing institutions of religion. He will observe which of these is the most sublime and rational in its doctrines, most venerable in its mysteries, most useful in its precepts, most decent in its worship? which createth the noblest hopes, and most worthy views? He will consider their rise and progress: which oweth least to human arts or arms? which flatters the senses and gross inclinations of men? which adorns and improves the most excellent part of our nature? which hath been propagated in the most wonderful manner? which hath surmounted the greatest difficulties, or shewed the most disinterested zeal and sincerity in its professors? He will inquire, which best accords with nature and history? He will consider, what savours of the world, and what looks like wisdom from above? He will be careful to separate human alloy from that which is Divine; and, upon the whole, form his judgment like a reasonable free-thinker. But, instead of taking such a rational course, one of these hasty sceptics shall conclude without demurring, there is no wisdom in politics, no honesty in dealings, no knowledge in philosophy, no truth in religion; and all by one and the same sort of inference, from the numerous examples of folly, knavery, ignorance, and error which are to be met with in the world. But, as those who are unknowing in everything else imagine themselves sharp-sighted in religion, this learned sophism is oftenest levelled against Christianity.

[1] See *Guardian*, No. 9, on the intellectual narrowness of 'Free-thinkers'; hence called 'minute philosophers.'

30. In my opinion, he that would convince an infidel who can be brought to reason ought in the first place clearly to convince him of the being of a God: it seeming to me, that any man who is really a theist, cannot be an enemy to the Christian religion; and that the ignorance or disbelief of this fundamental point is that which at bottom constitutes the minute philosopher[1]. I imagine they who are acquainted with the great authors in the minute philosophy need not be told of this. The being of a God is capable of clear proof, and a proper object of human reason: whereas the mysteries of His nature, and indeed whatever there is of mystery in religion, to endeavour to explain and prove by reason is a vain attempt[2]. It is sufficient if we can shew there is nothing absurd or repugnant in our belief of those points; and, instead of framing hypotheses to explain them, we use our reason only for answering the objections brought against them. But, on all occasions, we ought to distinguish the serious, modest, ingenuous man of sense, who hath scruples about religion, and behaves like a prudent man in doubt, from the minute philosophers, those profane and conceited men, who must needs proselyte others to their own doubts. When one of this stamp presents himself, we should consider what species he is of: whether a first or a second-hand philosopher, a libertine, scorner, or sceptic; each character requiring a peculiar treatment. Some men are too ignorant to be humble, without which there can be no docility. But though a man must in some degree have thought and considered, to be capable of being convinced, yet it is possible the most ignorant may be laughed out of his opinions. I knew a woman of sense reduce two minute philosophers, who had long been a nuisance to the neighbourhood, by taking her cue from their predominant affectations. The one set up for being the most incredulous man upon earth, the other for the most unbounded freedom. She observed to the first, that he who had credulity sufficient to trust the most valuable things, his life and

[1] *Alciphron* is accordingly a discussion of the rationale of theism; latterly of theism in its Christian form.

[2] Is not theistic faith or trust the presupposition of all proof, rather than itself dependent on external proof? Religion is rooted in human nature as a whole, not deduced by an abstract intelligence.

fortune, to his apothecary and lawyer, ridiculously affected the character of incredulous by refusing to trust his soul, a thing in his own account but a mere trifle, to his parish priest. The other, being what you call a beau, she made sensible how absolute a slave he was in point of dress, to him the most important thing in the world, while he was earnestly contending for a liberty of thinking, with which he never troubled his head; and how much more it concerned and became him to assert an independency on fashion, and obtain scope for his genius where it was best qualified to exert itself. The minute philosophers at first hand are very few, and, considered in themselves, of small consequence: but their followers, who pin their faith upon them, are numerous, and not less confident than credulous; there being something in the air and manner of these second-hand philosophers very apt to disconcert a man of gravity and argument, and much more difficult to be borne than the weight of their objections.

31. Crito having made an end, *Euphranor* declared it to be his opinion, that it would much conduce to the public benefit, if, instead of discouraging free-thinking, there was erected in the midst of this free country a Dianoetic Academy, or seminary for free-thinkers, provided with retired chambers, and galleries, and shady walks and groves, where, after seven years spent in silence and meditation, a man might commence a genuine free-thinker, and from that time forward have licence to think what he pleased, and a badge to distinguish him from counterfeits.

In good earnest, said *Crito*, I imagine that thinking is the great *desideratum* of the present age; and that the real cause of whatever is amiss may justly be reckoned the general neglect of education in those who need it most—the people of fashion. What can be expected where those who have the most influence have the least sense, and those who are sure to be followed set the worst example? where youth so uneducated are yet so forward? where modesty is esteemed pusillanimity, and a deference to years, knowledge, religion, laws, want of sense and spirit? Such untimely growth of genius would not have

been valued or encouraged by the wise men of antiquity: whose sentiments on this point are so ill suited to the genius of our times that it is to be feared modern ears could not bear them. But, however ridiculous such maxims might seem to our British youth, who are so capable and so forward to try experiments, and mend the constitution of their country, I believe it will be admitted by men of sense that, if the governing part of mankind would in these days, for experiment's sake, consider themselves in that old Homerical light as pastors of the people, whose duty it was to improve their flock, they would soon find that this is to be done by an education very different from the modern, and other guess maxims than those of the *minute philosophy*. If our youth were really inured to thought and reflexion, and an acquaintance with the excellent writers of antiquity, we should soon see that licentious humour, vulgarly called *free-thinking*, banished from the presence of gentlemen, together with ignorance and ill taste; which as they are inseparable from vice, so men follow vice for the sake of pleasure, and fly from virtue through an abhorrence of pain. Their minds, therefore, betimes should be formed and accustomed to receive pleasure and pain from proper objects, or, which is the same thing, to have their inclinations and aversions rightly placed. Καλῶς χαίρειν ἢ μισεῖν. This, according to Plato and Aristotle, was the ὀρθὴ παιδεία, the right education[1]. And those who, in their own minds, their health, or their fortunes, feel the cursed effects of a wrong one, would do well to consider, they cannot make better amends for what was amiss in themselves than by preventing the same in their posterity.

While Crito was saying this, company came in, which put an end to our conversation.

[1] [Plato *in Protag.*, and Arist. *Ethic. ad Nicom.*, Lib. II. cap. 2, and Lib. X. cap. 9.]—AUTHOR.

THE

THEORY OF VISION

OR

VISUAL LANGUAGE

SHEWING THE IMMEDIATE PRESENCE AND PROVIDENCE OF A DEITY

VINDICATED AND EXPLAINED

BY THE AUTHOR OF

Alciphron, or, The Minute Philosopher

Acts xvii. 28.

'In Him we live, and move, and have our being.'

First published in 1733

[*Price One Shilling*]

EDITOR'S PREFACE

TO THE

THEORY OF VISION, OR VISUAL LANGUAGE, VINDICATED AND EXPLAINED

THIS tract, ostensibly a vindication and explanation of the theory, that in seeing we are interpreting a language which God is continually addressing to our senses, involves a retrospect of principles which Berkeley had been gradually unfolding and applying in his preceding metaphysical works.

More particularly in the Fourth Dialogue in *Alciphron*, on which the whole discussion in the *Minute Philosopher* may be said to turn, Euphranor is engaged in shewing that the phenomena perceived in sight are so connected, in the order of Nature, with our tactual, muscular, and locomotive experience, that we can read this experience in terms of what we see: so that the Power immanent in Nature is virtually *speaking to us* in all visual phenomena, thus giving the same sort of evidence that Supreme Power is living and active Intelligence as a man gives when he addresses us in spoken or written words. This argument may be taken as a development of the *Theory of Vision*, published more than twenty years before, now freed from the reserve with which it was embarrassed in the earlier work, when Berkeley's new conception of the reality of the material world was held back. In *Alciphron* it presents a striking lesson of the omnipresence of God in

Nature, and of the immediate dependence of all charges and natural laws upon constant Divine agency and adaptation.

The appearance of *Alciphron*, with this Fourth Dialogue at its centre, and with the original *Essay on Vision* of 1709 appended, called forth the following Anonymous Letter, containing articulate objections to his account of Sight as the language of God. The Letter was published in London, in the *Daily Post-Boy*, on September 9, 1732.

A Letter from an Anonymous Writer to the Author of the Minute Philosopher[1].

Reverend Sir,

I have read over your treatise called *Alciphron*, in which the Free-thinkers of the present age, in their various shifted tenets, are pleasantly, elegantly, and solidly confuted. The style is easy, the language plain, and the arguments are nervous. But upon the Treatise annexed thereto[2], and upon that part where you seem to intimate that Vision is the sole Language of God[3], I beg leave to make these few observations, and offer them to your's and your readers' consideration.

1. *Whatever it is without* that is the *cause* of any idea within, I call the *object* of sense: *the sensations arising from such objects*, I call *ideas*. The objects, therefore, that cause such sensations are without us, and the ideas within.

2. Had we but one sense, we might be apt to conclude that there were no objects at all without us, but that the whole scene of ideas which passed through the mind arose from its internal operations; but since the same object is the cause of ideas by different senses, thence we infer its existence. But, though the object be one and the same, the ideas that it produces in different senses have no manner of similitude with one another. Because,

3. Whatever connexion there is betwixt the idea of one sense and the idea of another, produced by the same object,

[1] The first edition of *Alciphron* was published six months before, and the *Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained* four months after the appearance of this Letter.

[2] The *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* was annexed to *Alciphron* on account of its connexion with the theistic argument in the Fourth Dialogue.

[3] The *Essay on Vision*, sect. 147; also *Alciphron*, Dial. IV. sect. 7–15.

arises only from experience. To explain this a little familiarly, let us suppose a man to have such an exquisite sense of feeling given him that he could perceive plainly and distinctly the inequality of the surface of two objects, which, by its reflecting and refracting the rays of light, produces the ideas of colours. At first, in the dark, though he plainly perceived a difference by his touch, yet he could not possibly tell which was red and which was white, whereas a little experience would make him feel a colour in the dark, as well as see it in the light.

4. The same word in languages stands very often for the object without, and for the ideas it produces within in the several senses. When it stands for any object without, it is the representative of no manner of idea; neither can we possibly have any idea of what is solely without us. Because,

5. Ideas within have no other connexion with the objects without than from the frame and make of our bodies, which is by the arbitrary appointment of God: and, though we cannot well help imagining that the objects without are something like our ideas within, yet a new set of senses, or the alteration of the old ones, would soon convince us of our mistake; and, though our ideas would then be never so different, yet the objects might be the same.

6. However, in the present situation of affairs, there is an infallible certain connexion betwixt the idea and the object; and, therefore, when an object produces an idea in one sense, we know, but from experience only, what idea it will produce in another sense.

7. The alteration of an object may produce a different idea in one sense from what it did before, which may not be distinguished by another sense. But, where the alteration occasions different ideas in different senses, we may, from our infallible experience, argue from the idea of one sense to that of the other; so that, if a different idea arises in two senses from the alteration of an object, either in situation or distance, or any other way, when we have the idea in one sense, we know from use what idea the object so situated will produce in the other.

8. Hence, as the operations of Nature are always regular and uniform, where the same alteration of the object occasions a smaller difference in the ideas of one sense, and a greater in the other, a curious observer may argue as well from exact observations as if the difference in the ideas was equal; since experience plainly teaches us that a just proportion is observed in the alteration of the ideas of each sense, from the alteration of the object. Within this sphere is confined all the judicious observations and knowledge of mankind.

Now, from these observations, rightly understood and considered, your *New Theory of Vision* must in a great measure fall to the ground, and the laws of Optics will be found to stand

upon the old unshaken bottom. For, though our ideas of magnitude and distance in one sense are entirely different from our ideas of magnitude and distance in another, yet we may justly argue from one to the other, as they have one common cause without, of which, as without, we cannot possibly have the faintest idea. The ideas I have of distance and magnitude by *feeling* are widely different from the ideas I have of them by *seeing*; but *that something without*, which is the cause of all the variety of the ideas within in one sense, is the cause also of the variety in the other: and, as they have a necessary connexion with it, we may very justly demonstrate from our ideas of feeling of the same object what will be our ideas in seeing. And, though to talk of seeing by tangible angles and tangible lines be, I agree with you, direct nonsense, yet to demonstrate from angles and lines in feelings, to the ideas in seeing that arise from the same common object, is very good sense, and so *vice versâ*.

From these observations, thus hastily laid together, and a thorough digestion thereof, a great many useful corollaries in all philosophical disputes might be collected.

I am,

Your humble servant, &c.

This Letter was regarded by Berkeley as important enough to draw forth this *Vindication and Explanation*, also in the form of a Letter, which was published in London in March, 1733, 'printed for J. Tonson in the Strand.' It was written in London, where Berkeley, now in indifferent health, had been staying with his family from the time of his return from Rhode Island, early in the preceding year.

The fortune of the *Vindication and Explanation of the Theory of Divine Visual Language* illustrates the tendency to read superficially and then neglect his cosmical and metaphysical conceptions, which strikes us when we follow their fortunes during his life. This interesting tract was unaccountably excluded from all collected editions of Berkeley's *Works* preceding the Oxford edition in 1871. It seems to have been forgotten for nearly a hundred years. It is alluded to in Smith's *Optics*, in 1738, and a century later by Sir James Mackintosh in his *Disserta-*

tion[1], and by Sir William Hamilton in his *Discussions*[2]. Its republication in 1860 by Mr. Cowell of King's College, London, has now made it familiar to students.

The eight opening sections of Berkeley's *Answer* press with earnestness the importance of 'Visual Language' as 'a new and unanswerable proof of the existence and immediate operation of God, and the constant care of His Providence,' against 'those who called themselves free-thinkers,' and were by Berkeley charged with a covert atheism, which made them 'minute' philosophers. Here especially, and occasionally in *Alciphron*, his natural impetuosity, added to indignation on account of the exclusive claim of the 'minute philosophers' to free employment of reason in religion, tempt him to use language hardly consistent with the philosophical temper. Those whom he charged with atheism were professed theists, engaged with the important question of the nature and resources of what was called 'natural religion,' and the duty of reason to investigate this without restraint by ecclesiastical or other authority. This is a question which raises the deepest problems that can engage the human mind. It is true that one cannot rate highly either the religious or the philosophical insight of the deistical free-thinkers who were Berkeley's contemporaries. Their narrow premises and rapid conclusions were discredited by Berkeley and Butler. But they raised questions which still engross religious thinkers, which were soon afterwards discussed with more insight by Hume and Kant. And one must not forget the warm friendship of John Locke for Anthony Collins, against whom Berkeley directs his strongest invective. 'Believe it, my good friend,' Locke writes to Collins, 'to love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot

[1] In connexion with Shaftesbury.
[2] In the article on Arthur Collier.

of all other virtues; and if I mistake not, you have as much of it as ever I met with in any body.' This is the spirit in which Locke speaks of Collins throughout their interesting correspondence [1].

Sect. 9–18 offer some preliminary verbal explanations. In particular, the distinction between *objects* of perception in the five senses (called also *ideas* and *sensations*), on the one hand, and the *cause* of those appearances on the other hand, is strenuously insisted on, as of prime importance in the discussion. Then, as regards *objects*, it is ruled that those presented in each of the five senses have nothing in common with those presented in the other senses; and yet they are so connected, under natural law, that objects perceived in one of our senses are made by the Supreme Power, signs of objects perceptible by another sense—the data of one thus forming what is virtually a language which tells us of data provided by the others. But mere appearances presented to our senses, and their significant relations to one another, must not be confounded with metaphysical questions about Power at work in this phenomenal cosmos. A study of the phenomena presented in the different senses should precede the deeper question about the Power that is continually at work throughout the Whole, and of which the Whole is a revelation. The theory of Vision, strictly regarded, is exhausted when it has fully realised the conception, that the *objects* of sight are *signs* in what is virtually a language; but this opens the way to the higher conception, that this language is Divine, so that the entire universe of interpretable phenomena presented in sense is really a revelation of the Supreme Power as Active Mind.

Articulate answers to each of the eight objections in the 'Anonymous Letter' are given in sect. 19–34, based upon these preliminary explanations.

[1] See the letters to Collins in Locke's *Works*, vol. X. pp. 261–98.

In sect. 35–47 the 'New Theory of Vision,' unfolded analytically in the juvenile *Essay* in 1709, is presented in reverse order, or synthetically. The aim of the previous analysis was to dissolve the prejudice occasioned by the constant association of visual with tactual experience; to exhibit their antethesis as objects; and after that their synthesis as interpretable signs. But in the *Vindication* the conclusion reached in the early *Essay* is presupposed at the outset, and then applied to explain our judgments of the situations, sizes, and distances of things, which we seem to see immediately. In all this there is involved the assumption that the human mind is governed by a law of suggestion through previous concomitance of the phenomena involved in the suggestion (sect. 39). Suggestion belongs primarily to sense more than to reason: to be *suggested* is one thing, to be *inferred* is another (sect. 42). In Visual Language the objects or signs are light and colour. *How* it comes to pass that we can apprehend, by the phenomena of light and colour, which are the only proper objects of sight, certain other ideas or objects, which neither resemble them, nor cause them, nor are caused by them, nor have any necessary connexion with them, comprehends in his view the whole theory of Vision (sect. 42). The leading constituents of the theory are, the absolute heterogeneity of objects visible and objects tangible; an assumption of our inability *a priori* to interpret the tactual meaning of visual objects, in their capacity of visual signs; and the proof that a constant association between the visual and the tangible world in our experience, together with instinctive faith in the uniformity of nature, is sufficient to infuse reliable tactual meaning into the appearances of which we are immediately percipient in seeing (sect. 41–47).

In sect. 48–69 this theory is applied synthetically to explain in detail our interpretation of Visual Signs

of the tactual Situations, Magnitudes, and Distances of things.

The *Vindication* closes (sect. 70), with an allusion to Chesselden's notable record, in the *Philosophical Transactions*, of the case of a youth born blind, and afterwards made to see; in confirmation of the conclusion that our now constantly exercised ability to read the tactual meaning of visual signs is not an inexplicable instinct, but is explicable according to known laws of suggestion, under divinely-maintained relations between objects of sight and objects of touch.

The design of this recognition of Visual Language is the practical one of restoring and sustaining faith in the constancy and universality of Divine Agency in the natural world. Sensuous phenomena are thus equivalent to words spoken by God, which we are all daily interpreting; so that man by reflexion finds in them proof that he is always living and moving in a universe that is charged with Providential Intelligence.

THE

THEORY OF VISION

OR

VISUAL LANGUAGE, VINDICATED AND EXPLAINED

In answer to an Anonymous Writer

1. An ill state of health, which permits me to apply myself but seldom and by short intervals to any kind of studies, must be my apology, Sir, for not answering your Letter[1] sooner. This would have altogether excused me from a controversy upon points either personal or purely speculative, or from entering the lists with declaimers, whom I leave to the triumph of their own passions. And indeed to one of this character, who contradicts himself and misrepresents me, what answer can be made more than to desire his readers not to take his word for what I say, but to use their own eyes, read, examine, and judge for themselves? And to their Common Sense I appeal. For such a writer, such an answer may suffice. But argument, I allow, hath a right to be considered, and, where it doth not convince, to be opposed with reason. And being persuaded that the *Theory of Vision*, annexed to *The Minute Philosopher*, affords to thinking men a new and unanswerable proof of the Existence and immediate Operation of God, and the constant condescending care of

[1] [Published in the *Daily Post-Boy* of September the 9th, 1732.]—Author.

His Providence, I think myself concerned, as well as I am able, to defend and explain it, at a time wherein Atheism hath made a greater progress than some are willing to own, or others to believe.

2. [1] He who considers that the present avowed enemies of Christianity began their attacks against it under the specious pretext of defending the Christian Church and its rights [2], when he observes the same men pleading for Natural Religion, will be tempted to suspect their views, and judge of their sincerity in one case from what they have shewed in the other. Certainly the notion of a watchful, active, intelligent, free Spirit, with whom we have to do, and in whom we live and move and have our being, is not the most prevailing in the books and conversation even of those who are called Deists. Besides, as their schemes take effect, we may plainly perceive moral virtue and the religion of nature to decay, and see, both from reason and experience, that the destroying the Revealed Religion must end in Atheism or Idolatry. It must be owned, many minute philosophers would not like at present to be accounted Atheists. But how many, twenty years ago, would have been affronted to be thought Infidels, who would now be much more affronted to be thought Christians! As it would be unjust to charge those with Atheism who are not really tainted with it; so it will be allowed very uncharitable and imprudent to overlook it in those who are, and suffer such men, under specious pretexts, to spread their principles, and in the event to play the same game with Natural Religion that they have done with Revealed.

3. It must, without question, shock some innocent admirers of a certain plausible pretender to Deism and Natural Religion [3], if a man should say, there are strong signatures of Atheism and irreligion in every sense, natural as well as revealed, to be found even in that admired writer: and yet, to introduce taste instead of

[1] Sect. 1–8 contain observations upon 'free thinking' Atheism, which the author finds at the root of the English Deism, in the early part of last century. Cf. *Alciphron*, Dial. I.

[2] The allusion is to Tindal's *Rights of the Christian Church*. See sect. 5, note 3.

[3] Shaftesbury, against whom the Third Dialogue in *Alciphron* is directed.

duty, to make man a necessary agent, to deride a future judgment, seem to all intents and purposes atheistical, or subversive of all religion whatsoever. And these every attentive reader may plainly discover to be his principles; although it be not always easy to fix a determinate sense on such a loose and incoherent writer. There seems to be a certain way of writing, whether good or bad, tinsel or sterling, sense or nonsense, which, being suited to that size of understanding that qualifies its owners for the Minute Philosophy, doth marvellously strike and dazzle those ingenious men, who are by this means conducted they know not how, and they know not whither. Doubtless that Atheist who gilds, and insinuates, and, even while he insinuates, disclaims his principles, is the likeliest to spread them. What availeth it, in the cause of Virtue and Natural Religion, to acknowledge the strongest traces of wisdom and power throughout the structure of the universe, if this wisdom is not employed to observe, nor this power to recompense our actions; if we neither believe ourselves accountable, nor God our Judge?

4. All that is said of a vital principle, or order, harmony, and proportion; all that is said of the natural decorum and fitness of things; all that is said of taste and enthusiasm, may well consist and be supported, without a grain even of Natural Religion; without any notion of Law or Duty, any belief of a Lord or Judge, or any religious sense of a God: the contemplation of the mind upon the ideas of beauty, and virtue, and order, and fitness, being one thing, and a sense of religion another. So long as we admit no principle of good actions but natural affection, no reward but natural consequences; so long as we apprehend no judgment, harbour no fears, and cherish no hopes of a future state, but laugh at all these things, with the author of the *Characteristics*, and those whom he esteems the liberal and polished part of mankind[1], how

[1] [*Characteristics*, vol. III. Miscel. 3, ch. 2.]—AUTHOR. 'The fortune of the *Characteristics*,' says Sir. J. Mackintosh, 'has been singular. For a time the work was admired more undistinguishingly than its literary character warrants. In the succeeding period it was justly criticised, but too severely condemned. Of late, more unjustly than in either of the two former cases, it has been generally neglected. It seemed to have the power of changing the temper of

can we be said to be religious in any sense? Or what is here that an Atheist may not find his account in as well as a Theist? To what moral purpose might not Fate or Nature serve as well as a Deity, on such a scheme? And is not this, at bottom, the amount of all those fair pretences?

5. Certainly that atheistical men, who hold no principles of any religion, natural or revealed, are an increasing number, and this too among people of no despicable rank, hath long since been expressly acknowledged by one who will be allowed a proper judge, even this same plausible pretender himself to Deism and Enthusiasm[1]. But if any well-meaning persons, deluded by artful writers in the Minute Philosophy, or wanting the opportunity of any unreserved conversation with some ingenious men of that sect, should think that *Lysicles*[2] hath overshot the mark, and misrepresented their principles; to be satisfied of the contrary, they need only cast an eye on the *Philosophical Dissertation upon Death*[3], lately published by a minute philosopher. Perhaps some man of leisure may think it worth while to trace the progress and unfolding of their principles, down from the writer in defence of the *Rights of the Christian Church*[4], to this plain dealer, the admirable author upon *Death*. During which period of time, I think one may observe a laid design gradually to undermine

its critics. It provoked the amiable Berkeley to a harshness equally unwonted and unwarranted; while it softened the rugged Warburton so far as to dispose the fierce yet not altogether ungenerous polemic to praise an enemy in the very heat of conflict.'—*Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy*, sect. V.

[1] [*Moralists*, Part II. sect. 3.]—AUTHOR.

[2] One of the two free-thinking interlocutors in *Alciphron*.

[3] *A Philosophical Dissertation upon Death, composed for the Consolation of the Unhappy*. By a Friend to Truth. (London, 1732.) This work was attributed to A. Radicati, Count de Passerano, and the translation to John (Thomas?) Morgan. The fear of death, as well as all moral feelings and judgments, are referred in this Essay to custom and convention; the licence of a morality according to circumstances is vindicated; also the lawfulness and occasional expediency of suicide.

[4] *The Rights of the Christian Church asserted against the Romish and other Priests who claim an independent power over it. With a Preface concerning the Government of the Church of England as by Law established*. (London, 1706.) The author was Matthew Tindal. The work called forth a host of controversial pamphlets. It was defended by Le Clerc and others as a fair attack on Sacerdotalism. In 1731, Tindal published his *Christianity as old as the Creation: or the Gospel a republication of the Religion of Nature*.

the belief of the Divine Attributes and Natural Religion—which scheme runs parallel with their gradual, covert, insincere proceedings, in respect of the Gospel.

6. That atheistical principles have taken deeper root, and are farther spread than most people are apt to imagine, will be plain to whoever considers that Pantheism, Materialism, Fatalism are nothing but Atheism a little disguised; that the notions of Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibnitz[1], and Bayle are relished and applauded; that as they who deny the freedom and immortality of the soul in effect deny its being, even so they do, as to all moral effects and natural religion, deny the being of God, who deny Him to be an observer, judge, and rewarder of human actions; that the course of arguing pursued by infidels leads to Atheism as well as Infidelity[2].

[An instance of this may be seen in the proceeding of the author of a book[3] intituled, *A Discourse of Free-thinking occasioned by the Rise and Growth of a sect called Free-thinkers*; who, having insinuated his infidelity, from men's various pretences and opinions concerning revealed religion, in like manner appears to insinuate his Atheism, from the differing notions of men concerning the nature and attributes of God particularly from the opinion of our knowing God by Analogy (see p. 42 of the mentioned book), as it hath been misunderstood and misinterpreted by some of late years. Such is the ill effect of untoward defences and explanations of our faith; and such advantage do incautious friends give its enemies. If there be any modern well-meaning writer, who (perhaps from not having considered the Fifth Book of *Euclid*) writes much of Analogy without understanding it, and thereby hath slipped his foot into this snare, I wish him to slip

[1] Leibniz is here strangely associated with Hobbes, Spinoza, and Bayle, his professed antagonists; perhaps on the ground of his account of moral agency, in the *Theodicée*, and in his *Correspondence* with Clarke.

[2] 'Infidelity'—want of faith in Christianity.

[3] Anthony Collins, whose *Discourse* appeared in 1713, and was the occasion of much controversy. See in particular *Remarks upon a late Discourse of Free-thinking: in a letter to T. H., D.D.* (Dr. Hare, afterwards Bishop of Chichester), *by Phileleutherus Lipsiensis* (Dr. Bentley). London, 1713. It was in 1713 that Berkeley's Essays against the Free-thinkers appeared in the *Guardian*.

cat back again, and, instead of causing scandal to good men and triumph to Atheists, discreetly explain away his first sense, and return to speak of God and His attributes in the style of other Christians; allowing that knowledge and wisdom do, in the proper sense of the words, belong to God, and that we have some notion, though infinitely inadequate, of these Divine attributes, yet still more than a man blind from his birth can have of sight and colours[1].

But to return, if I see it in their writings, if they own it in their conversation, if their ideas imply it, if their ends are not answered but by supposing it, if their leading author[2] hath pretended to demonstrate Atheism, but thought fit to conceal his Demonstration from the public; if this was known in their clubs, and yet that author was nevertheless followed, and represented to the world as a believer of Natural Religion; if these things are so (and I know them to be so), surely what the favourers of their schemes would palliate, it is the duty of others to display and refute.

7. And although the characters of Divinity are large and legible throughout the whole creation to men of plain

[1] Cf. *Alciphron*, Dialogue IV. sect. 16–22, in which the terms feeling, knowledge, and goodness, as attributable to God, and the opinion that those must then be wholly analogical, i. e. metaphorical, are discussed. The 'well-meaning writer, who writes much of Analogy without understanding it,' is Bishop Browne, whose book, entitled, *Things Divine and Supernatural conceived by Analogy with Things Human*, appeared in 1733, soon after *Alciphron*. Besides Berkeley and Browne, both Irish bishops, two archbishops of Dublin, three English prelates, and an English dean, have discussed the possibility of knowledge of God by man, and whether, like the born-blind knowledge of light and colour, it is wholly 'analogical,' so that intellectual, moral, and spiritual life and personality, in the human meaning of those words, cannot be affirmed of Deity with absolute truth. I refer to Archbishop King's discourse on *The Right Method of interpreting Scripture, in what relates to the Nature of the Deity*, edited with notes by Archbishop Whately; Bishop Law's Notes on Archbishop King's *Essay on the Origin of Evil;* Bishop Copleston's *Inquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination;* Bishop Hampden's Bampton Lectures on *The Scholastic Philosophy in its relation to Christian Theology;* and Dean Mansel's Bampton Lectures on *The Limits of Religious Thought.*

[2] Anthony Collins. Cf. *Alciphron*—'Advertisement,' note. 'It is only through an analogy of the human with the Divine nature,' says Sir W. Hamilton, 'that we are percipient and recipient of Divinity' (*Discussions*, p. 20, note).

sense and common understanding, yet it must be considered that we have other adversaries to oppose, other proselytes to make; men prejudiced to false systems and proof against vulgar arguments, who must be dealt with on a different footing. Conceited, metaphysical, disputing men must be paid in another coin; we must shew that truth and reason in all shapes are equally against them, except we resolve to give them up, what they are very fond of being thought to engross, all pretensions to philosophy, science, and speculation.

8. Meanwhile thus much is evident: those good men who shall not care to employ their thoughts on this Theory of Vision have no reason to find fault. They are just where they were, being left in full possession of all other arguments for a God, none of which are weakened by this. And as for those who shall be at the pains to examine and consider this subject, it is hoped they may be pleased to find, in an age wherein so many schemes of Atheism are restored or invented, a new argument of a singular nature in proof of the immediate Care and Providence of a God, present to our minds, and directing our actions. As these considerations convince me that I cannot employ myself more usefully than in contributing to awaken and possess men with a thorough sense of the Deity inspecting, concerning, and interesting itself in human actions and affairs: so, I hope it will not be disagreeable to you[1] that, in order to this, I make my appeal to reason, from your remarks upon what I have wrote concerning Vision; since men who differ in the means may yet agree in the end, and in the same candour and love of truth.

9. By a sensible *object*[2] I understand that which is properly perceived by sense. Things properly perceived by sense are *immediately* perceived. Besides things properly and immediately perceived by any sense, there may be also other things suggested to the mind by means

[1] 'you,' i. e. the anonymous writer of the 'Letter to the Author of the *Minute Philosopher*,' to which this 'Vindication' is the reply.

[2] Sect. 9–18 contrast the *objects* of which we are directly percipient in sense, with the *active cause* which presents them to the percipient being. Cf. Observation 1 of the anonymous writer.

of those proper and immediate objects; which things so suggested are not objects of that sense, being in truth only objects of the imagination, and originally belonging to some other sense or faculty. Thus, sounds are the proper objects of hearing, being properly and immediately perceived by that, and by no other sense. But, by the mediation of sounds or words, all other things may be suggested to the mind; and yet things so suggested are not thought the object of hearing [1].

10. The peculiar objects of each sense, although they are truly or strictly perceived by that sense alone, may yet be suggested to the imagination by some other sense. The objects therefore of all the senses may become objects of imagination; which faculty represents all sensible things. A colour, therefore, which is truly perceived by sight alone, may, nevertheless, upon hearing the words blue or red, be apprehended by the imagination. It is in a primary and peculiar manner the object of sight; in a secondary manner it is the object of imagination: but cannot properly be supposed the object of hearing.

11. The *objects* of sense, being things immediately perceived, are otherwise called *ideas*.

The *cause* of these ideas, or the power of producing them, is not the object of sense, not being itself perceived, but only inferred by reason from its effects, to wit, those objects or ideas which are perceived by sense. From our ideas of sense the inference of reason is good to power, cause, agent. But we may not therefore infer that our ideas are like unto this Power, Cause, or Active Being. On the contrary, it seems evident that an idea can be only like another idea, and that in our ideas or immediate objects of sense, there is nothing of power, causality, or agency included [2].

12. Hence it follows that the Power or Cause of ideas is not an object of sense, but of reason. Our knowledge of the cause is measured by the effect; of the power, by our idea. To the absolute nature, therefore, of outward

[1] What is 'suggested' is not an immediately present object of sense, but is represented in imagination, which thus, in the form of an expectation, ministers to immediate perception. Is not reason unconsciously at work in the spontaneous expectation here called 'suggestion'?

[2] Cf. *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 25–28.

causes or powers, we have nothing to say: they are not objects of our sense or perception. Whenever, therefore, the appellation of sensible *object* is used in a determined intelligible sense, it is not applied to signify the absolutely existing outward cause or power, but the ideas themselves produced thereby.

13. Ideas which are observed to be connected together are vulgarly considered under the relation of cause and effect, whereas, in strict and philosophic truth, they are only related as the sign to the thing signified. For, we know our ideas, and therefore know that one idea cannot be the cause of another. We know that our ideas of sense are not the cause of themselves [1]. We know also that *we* do not cause them. Hence we know they *must* have some other efficient Cause, distinct from *them* and *us* [2].

14. In treating of Vision, it was my purpose to consider the effects and appearances, the objects, perceived by my senses, the ideas of sight as connected with those of touch [3]; to inquire how one idea comes to suggest another belonging to a different sense, how things visible suggest things tangible, how present things suggest things more remote and future, whether by likeness, by necessary connexion, by geometrical inference, or by arbitrary institution.

15. It hath indeed been a prevailing opinion and undoubted principle among mathematicians and philosophers that there were certain ideas common to both senses: whence arose the distinction of primary and secondary qualities. But, I think it hath been demonstrated that there is no such thing as a common object—as an idea, or kind of idea perceived both by sight and touch [4].

[1] In other words, all (so-called) *natural causes* are only *constant forerunners* or *signs* of the changes in nature which are popularly called their effects, and which accordingly they signify and suggest. The modern conception of physical science is involved in this sentence. Cf. *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 25, 26, 51–53, 65, 66, &c.; also *De Motu*, sect. 1–42.

[2] This is Berkeley's externality. The material world is realised in living mind, but is independent of my will, and is thus *not me*. Cf. *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 56, 57, &c.

[3] i. e. the *effects*, *appearances*, or *objects* (called *ideas*); as distinguished from their *active cause*, of which we are not immediately percipient.

[4] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 127, &c.]—AUTHOR.

16. In order to treat with due exactness on the nature of Vision, it is necessary in the first place accurately to consider our own ideas[1]; to distinguish where there is a difference; to call things by their right names; to define terms, and not confound ourselves and others by their ambiguous use; the want or neglect whereof hath so often produced mistakes. Hence it is that men talk as if one idea was the efficient cause of another; hence they mistake inferences of reason for perceptions of sense; hence they confound the *power* residing in somewhat external with the proper *object* of sense; which is in truth no more than our own idea.

17. When we have well understood and considered the nature of Vision[2], we may, by reasoning from thence, be better able to collect some knowledge of the external unseen Cause of our ideas; whether it be one or many, intelligent or unintelligent, active or inert, body or spirit. But, in order to understand and comprehend this Theory, and discover the true principles thereof, we should consider the likeliest way is, not to attend to unknown substances, external causes, agents or powers; nor to reason or infer anything about or from things obscure, unperceived, and altogether unknown.

18. As in this inquiry we are concerned with what objects we perceive, or our own ideas, so, upon them our reasonings must proceed. To treat of things utterly unknown as if we knew them, and so lay our beginning in obscurity, would not surely seem the properest means for the discovering of truth. Hence it follows, that it would be wrong if one about to treat of the nature of Vision, should, instead of attending to visible ideas, define the object of sight to be that obscure Cause, that invisible Power or Agent, which produced visible ideas in our minds. Certainly such Cause or Power does not seem to be the *object* either of the sense or the science of Vision, inasmuch as what we know thereby we know only of the effects. Having premised thus much, I now proceed to

[1] In other words, we must contrast the *objects* or *appearances* of which we are conscious in each of our senses—the immediate data of each sense.

[2] i. e. what we are conscious of in seeing—apart from the active cause which gives rise to the sight.

consider the principles laid down in your Letter, which I shall take in order as they lie.

19. [1] In your *first paragraph* or *section*, you say that 'whatever it is without which is the *cause* of any idea within, you call the object of sense'; and you tell us soon after this [2], 'that we cannot possibly have an idea of any object without.'—Hence it follows that by an *object of sense* you mean something that we can have no manner of idea of. This making the objects of sense to be things utterly insensible seems to me contrary to common sense and the use of language. That there is nothing in the reason of things to justify such a definition is, I think, plain from what has been premised [3]. And that it is contrary to received custom and opinion, I appeal to the experience of the first man you meet, who I suppose will tell you that by an object of sense he means that which is perceived by sense, and not a thing utterly unperceivable and unknown. The Beings, Substances, Powers which exist without may indeed concern a treatise on some other science, and may there become a proper subject of inquiry. But, why they should be considered as objects of the visive faculty, in a treatise of Optics, I do not comprehend [4].

20. The real objects of sight we see, and what we see we know. And these true objects of sense and knowledge, to wit, our own ideas, are to be considered, compared, distinguished, in order to understand the true Theory of Vision. As to the outward Cause of these ideas, whether it be one and the same, or various and manifold, whether it be thinking or unthinking, spirit or body, or

[1] Sect. 19–34 contain answers to the objections of the *Anonymous Writer*, and remarks upon his *Letter*.

[2] [Sect. 4.]—AUTHOR.

[3] [*Supra*, sect. 9, 11, 12.]—AUTHOR. In short, Berkeley and his critic use the term *object of sense* differently.

[4] Here, as elsewhere, Berkeley insists upon a distinction between the appearances of which we are actually conscious in sense (which he calls *objects* or *ideas* of sense), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, what is *suggested* by the objects of sense—between *present objects of sense* and *absent objects* suggested by them; and between both of these the Divine Power on which they both depend, and by which their relations are determined.

whatever else we conceive or determine about it, the visible appearances do not alter their nature: our ideas are still the same. Though I may have an erroneous notion of the Cause, or though I may be utterly ignorant of its nature, yet this does not hinder my making true and certain judgments about my ideas; my knowing which are the same, and which different; wherein they agree, and wherein they disagree; which are connected together, and wherein this connexion consists; whether it be founded in a likeness of nature, in a geometrical necessity, or merely in experience and custom.

21. In your *second section*, you say that 'if we had but one sense, we might be apt to conclude there were no objects at all without us; but that, since the same object is the cause of ideas by different senses, thence we infer its existence.'—Now, in the first place, I observe, that I am at a loss concerning the point which is here assumed, and would fain be informed how we come to know that the same object causeth ideas by different senses. In the next place, I must observe that, if I had only one sense, I should nevertheless infer and conclude there was *some* cause without me (which you, it seems, define to be an *object*), producing the sensations or ideas perceived by that sense. For, if I am conscious that I do not cause them, and know that they are not the cause of themselves, both which points seem very clear, it plainly follows that there must be some other third cause distinct from me and them[1].

22. In your *third section*, you acknowledge with me that 'the connexion between ideas of different senses ariseth only from experience.'—Herein we are agreed.

In your *fourth section* you say that 'a word denoting an external object, is the representative of no manner of idea. Neither can we possibly have an idea of what is solely without us.'—What is here said of an external unknown object hath been already considered[2].

23. In the *following section* of your Letter, you declare that 'our ideas have only an arbitrary connexion with

[1] A Power of some sort, external to my power, may accordingly be inferred from the appearances of which I am conscious in each of my senses—because distinguishable in its operation from my personal agency.

[2] [*Supra*, sect. 19.]—Author.

outward objects, that they are nothing like the outward objects, and that a variation in our ideas doth not imply or infer a change in the objects, which may still remain the same.'—Now, to say nothing about the confused use of the word 'object,' which hath been more than once already observed, I shall only remark that the points asserted in this section do not seem to consist with some others that follow.

24. For, in the *sixth section*, you say that 'in the present situation of things, there is an infallible certain connexion between the idea and the object.'—But how can we perceive this connexion, since, according to you, we never perceive such object, nor can have any idea of it? or, not perceiving it, how can we know this connexion to be infallibly certain?

25. In the *seventh section*, it is said that 'we may, from our infallible experience, argue from our idea of one sense to that of another.'—But, I think it is plain that our experience of the connexion between ideas of sight and touch is not infallible; since, if it were, there could be no *deceptio visus*, neither in painting, perspective, dioptrics, nor any otherwise.

26. In the *last section*, you affirm that 'experience plainly teaches us that a just proportion is observed in the alteration of the ideas of each sense, from the alteration of the object.'—Now, I cannot possibly reconcile this section with the fifth; or comprehend how experience should shew us that the alteration of the object produceth a proportionable alteration in the ideas of different senses, or how indeed it should shew us anything at all either from or about the alteration of an object utterly unknown, of which we neither have nor can have any manner of idea. What I do not perceive or know, how can I perceive or know to be altered? And, knowing nothing of its alterations, how can I compute anything by them, deduce anything from them, or be said to have any experience about them [1]?

[1] In the preceding sections, Berkeley is virtually arguing against a *wholly representative* perception of things. Here and elsewhere he anticipates objections of Reid and Hamilton to this. What is unpresentable to any of my senses must be unrepresentable in sensuous imagination.

27. From the observations you have premised, rightly understood and considered, you say it follows that my '*New Theory of Vision* must in great measure fall to the ground ; and the laws of Optics will be found to stand upon the old unshaken bottom.'—But, though I have considered and endeavoured to understand your remarks, yet I do not in the least comprehend how this conclusion can be inferred from them. The reason you assign for such inference is, because, 'although our ideas in one sense are entirely different from our ideas in another, yet we may justly argue from one to the other, as they have one common cause without. of which, as without,' you say, 'we cannot possibly have even the faintest idea.'—Now, my theory nowhere supposeth that we may not justly argue from the ideas of one sense to those of another, by analogy and by experience ; on the contrary, this very point is affirmed, proved, or supported throughout [1].

28. Indeed I do not see how the inferences which we make from visible to tangible ideas include any consideration of one common unknown external cause, or depend thereon, but only on mere custom or habit. The experience which I have had that certain ideas of one sense are attended or connected with certain ideas of a different sense is, I think, a sufficient reason why the one may suggest the other [2].

29. In the next place, you affirm that '*something without*, which is the cause of all the variety of ideas within in one sense, is the cause also of the variety in another: and, as they have a *necessary* connexion with it, we very justly demonstrate, from our ideas of feeling of the same object, what will be our ideas of seeing.'—As to which, give me leave to remark that to inquire whether that *unknown something* be the same in both cases, or different, is a point foreign to Optics ; inasmuch as our perceptions by the visive faculty will be the very same, however we determine that point. Perhaps I think that the same Being which causeth our ideas of sight doth cause not only our ideas of touch likewise, but also all our ideas

[1] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 38 and 78, &c.]—AUTHOR.

[2] Not unless I presuppose the *constancy* of the connexion—in a word, the interpretability of nature.

of all the other senses, with all the varieties thereof[1]. But this, I say, is foreign to the purpose[2].

30. As to what you advance, that our ideas have a *necessary* connexion with such cause, it seems to me *gratis dictum*: no reason is produced for this assertion; and I cannot assent to it without a reason. The ideas or effects I grant are evidently perceived: but the cause you say is utterly unknown[3]. How then can you tell whether such unknown cause acts arbitrarily or necessarily? I see the effects or appearances: and I know that effects must have a cause: but I neither see nor know that their connexion with that cause is necessary. Whatever there may be, I am sure I see no such necessary connexion, nor, consequently, can demonstrate by means thereof from ideas of one sense to those of another.

31. You add that 'although to talk of seeing by tangible angles and lines be direct nonsense, yet, to demonstrate from angles and lines in feelings to the ideas in seeing that arise from the same common object is very good sense.'—If by this no more is meant than that men might argue and compute geometrically by lines and angles in Optics, it is so far from carrying in it any opposition to my theory that I have expressly declared the same thing[4]. This doctrine, as admitted by me, is indeed subject to certain limitations; there being divers cases wherein the writers of Optics thought we judged by lines and angles, or by a sort of natural geometry, with regard to which I think they were mistaken, and I have given my reasons for it. And those reasons, as they are untouched in your letter, retain their force with me.

32. I have now gone through your reflexions, which the conclusion intimates to have been written in haste, and, having considered them with all the attention I am

[1] He thus recalls his fundamental conception of the active causality of sensible things in God, as opposed to their active causality in an unknown Something, called Matter, supposed to exist independently of all Mind.

[2] In Optics we are concerned exclusively, according to Berkeley, with the *effects*—the immediate data of the several senses, and their relations to one another, as immediately-perceived sensuous sign, and mediately-perceived sensible meaning.

[3] [*Letter*, sect. 1 and 4.]—AUTHOR.

[4] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 78.]—AUTHOR.

master of, must now leave it to the thinking reader to judge whether they contain anything that should oblige me to depart from what I have advanced in my *Theory of Vision*. For my own part, if I were ever so willing, it is not on this occasion in my power to indulge myself in the honest satisfaction it would be frankly to give up a known error; a thing so much more right and reputable to denounce than to defend. On the contrary, it should seem that the Theory will stand secure; since you agree with me that men do not see by lines and angles; since I, on the other hand, agree with you that we may nevertheless compute in Optics by lines and angles, as I have expressly shewed; since all that is said in your Letter about the object, the same object, the alteration of the object, is quite foreign to the Theory, which considereth our ideas[1] as the object of sense, and hath nothing to do with that unknown, unperceived, unintelligible thing which you signify by the word *object*[2]. Certainly the laws of Optics will not stand on the old, unshaken bottom, if it be allowed that we do not see by geometry[3]; if it be evident that explications of phenomena given by the received theories in Optics are insufficient and faulty; if other principles are found necessary for explaining the nature of vision; if there be no idea, nor kind of idea, common to both senses[4], contrary to the old received universal supposition of optic writers.

33. We not only impose on others but often on ourselves, by the unsteady or ambiguous use of terms. One would imagine that an *object* should be *perceived*. I must own, when that word is employed in a different sense, that I am at a loss for its meaning, and consequently cannot comprehend any arguments or conclusions about it. And I am not sure that, on my own part, some inaccuracy of expression, as well as the peculiar nature of the subject, not always easy either to explain or conceive, may not have rendered my Treatise concerning Vision difficult to a cursory reader. But, to one of due attention, and who makes my words an occasion of his own thinking, I con-

[1] 'our ideas,' i.e. the appearances presented to us in each of the senses.

[2] [*Supra*, sect. 14.]—AUTHOR.

[3] [*Letter*, sect. 8.]—AUTHOR.

[4] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 127.]—AUTHOR.

ceive the whole to be very intelligible: and, when it is rightly understood, I scarce doubt but it will be assented to. One thing at least I can affirm, that, if I am mistaken, I can plead neither haste nor inattention, having taken true pains and much thought about it.

34. And had you, Sir, thought it worth while to have dwelt more particularly on the subject, to have pointed out distinct passages in my Treatise, to have answered any of my objections to the received notions, refuted any of my arguments in behalf of mine, or made a particular application of your own; I might without doubt have profited by your reflections. But it seems to me we have been considering, either different things, or else the same things in such different views as the one can cast no light on the other. I shall, nevertheless, take this opportunity to make a review of my Theory, in order to render it more easy and clear; and the rather because, as I had applied myself betimes to this subject, it became familiar; and in treating of things familiar to ourselves, we are too apt to think them so to others.

35. [1] It seemed proper, if not unavoidable, to begin in the accustomed style of optic writers, admitting divers things as true, which, in a rigorous sense, are not such, but only received by the vulgar and admitted as such. There hath been a long and close connexion in our minds between the ideas of sight and touch [2]. Hence they are considered as one thing; which prejudice suiteth well enough with the purpose of life, and language is suited to this prejudice. The work of science and speculation is to unravel our prejudices and mistakes, untwisting the closest connexions, distinguishing things that are different; instead of confused or perplexed, giving us distinct views; gradually correcting our judgment, and reducing it to a philosophical exactness. And, as this work is the work of time, and done by degrees, it is extremely difficult, if at all possible, to escape the snares of popular language, and the being betrayed thereby to say things strictly speaking

[1] Sect. 35–47 contain a restatement of the theory, that the immediate data of sight constitute a Language in which God is continually addressing us.

[2] i. e. between phenomena that are visible only, and phenomena that are tangible only.

neither true nor consistent. This makes thought and candour more especially necessary in the reader. For, language being accommodated to the prænotions of men and use of life, it is difficult to express therein the precise truth of things, which is so distant from their use, and so contrary to our prænotions[1].

36. In the contrivance of Vision, as that of other things, the wisdom of Providence seemeth to have consulted the operation rather than the theory of man; to the former things are admirably fitted, but, by that very means, the latter is often perplexed[2]. For, as useful as these immediate suggestions and constant connexions are to direct our actions; so is our distinguishing between things confounded, and as it were blended together, no less necessary to the speculation and knowledge of truth.

37. The knowledge of these connexions, relations, and differences of things visible and tangible, their nature, force, and significancy hath not been duly considered by former writers on Optics, and seems to have been the great *desideratum* in that science, which for want thereof was confused and imperfect. A Treatise, therefore, of this philosophical kind, for the understanding of Vision, is at least as necessary as the physical consideration of the eye, nerve, coats, humours, refractions, bodily nature, and motion of light; or as the geometrical application of lines and angles for *praxis* or theory, in dioptric glasses and mirrors, for computing and reducing to some rule and measure our judgments, so far as they are proportional to the objects of geometry. In these three lights Vision should be considered, in order to a complete Theory of Optics.

38. It is to be noted that, in considering the Theory of Vision, I observed a certain known method, wherein, from false and popular suppositions, men do often arrive at truth. Whereas in the synthetical method of delivering science or truth already found, we proceed in an inverted order; the conclusions in the analysis being assumed as principles

[1] Cf. *Principles of Human Knowledge* — 'Introduction.'

[2] This sentence expresses well the final conceptions of things that are possible to an *un*omniscient intelligence, whose philosophy may be intelligent enough for conduct, while charged with speculative mysteries.

in the synthesis. I shall therefore now begin with that conclusion, that *Vision is the Language of the Author of Nature*, from thence deducing theorems and solutions of phenomena, and explaining the nature of visible things and the visive faculty[1].

39. Ideas which are observed to be connected with other ideas come to be considered as signs, by means whereof things not actually perceived by sense are signified or suggested to the imagination; whose objects they are, and which alone perceives them. And, as sounds suggest other things, so characters suggest other sounds; and, in general, all signs suggest the things signified, there being no idea which may not offer to the mind another idea which hath been frequently joined with it. In certain cases a sign may suggest its correlate as an image, in others as an effect, in others as a cause. But, where there is no such relation of similitude or causality, nor any necessary connexion whatsoever, two things, by their mere coexistence, or two ideas, merely by being perceived together, may suggest or signify one the other, their connexion being all the while arbitrary; for it is the connexion only, as such, that causeth this effect[2].

40. A great number of arbitrary signs[3], various and opposite, do constitute a Language. If such arbitrary connexion[3] be instituted by men, it is an artificial language;

[1] In the original *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, Berkeley proceeds analytically; whereas, in the following synopsis, he first hypothetically assumes the existence of a Visual Language—with which the earlier treatise concludes. He then proceeds to verify this, by shewing synthetically that it explains the phenomena of Vision; and in particular solves difficulties contained in our judgments of the situations, sizes, and distances of things.

[2] 'Suggestion' is the *constructive tendency* recognised in the New Theory; which is an application of the law of constant association, regulating imagination and belief in harmony with the constant sequences and coexistences divinely established among phenomena. It may be compared with Kant's theory of perception, according to which phenomena of sense, under the forms of space and time, are made intelligible through the categories. In *Siris*, sect. 318, Berkeley says that space is neither an intellectual notion, nor perceived by any of the senses.

[3] The natural connexion which makes them signs seems 'arbitrary' on account of our inadequate knowledge of rational order and adaptation in the constitution of the universe—not arbitrary in the sense of being really capricious and irrational.

if by the Author of Nature, it is a natural language. Infinitely various are the modifications of light and sound; whence they are each capable of supplying an endless variety of signs, and, accordingly, have been each employed to form languages; the one by the arbitrary appointment of mankind, the other by that of God Himself[1]. A connexion established by the Author of Nature, in the ordinary course of things, may surely be called natural, as that made by men will be named artificial. And yet this doth not hinder but the one may be as arbitrary as the other. And, in fact, there is no more likeness to exhibit, or necessity to infer, things tangible from the modifications of light, than there is in language to collect the meaning from the sound[2]. But such as the connexion is of the various tones and articulations of voice with their several meanings, the same is it between the various modes of light and their respective correlates, or, in other words, between the ideas of sight and touch.

41. As to light, and its several modes or colours, all thinking men are agreed that they are ideas peculiar only to sight; neither common to the touch, nor of the same kind with any that are perceived by that sense. But herein lies the mistake, that, beside these, there are supposed other ideas common to both senses, being equally perceived by sight and touch, such as Extension, Size, Figure, and Motion. But that there are in reality no such common ideas, and that the objects of sight[3], marked by these words, are entirely different and heterogeneous from whatever is the object of feeling[4], marked by the same names, hath been proved in the *Theory*[5], and seems by you admitted; though I cannot conceive how you should in reason admit this, and at the same time contend for the received theories, which are so much ruined as mine is established by this main part and pillar thereof.

42. To perceive is one thing; to judge is another. So

[1] [*Minute Philosopher*, Dial. IV. sect. 7, 11.]—Author.

[2] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 144 and 147.]—Author.

[3] i. e. the *immediate* objects—the appearances of which we are visually conscious.

[4] i. e. the *immediate* objects—the appearances of which we are conscious in our tactual, muscular, and locomotive experience.

[5] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 127.]—Author.

likewise, to be suggested is one thing, and to be inferred another. Things are suggested and perceived by sense. We make judgments and inferences by the understanding. What we immediately and properly perceive by sight is its primary object—light and colours. What is suggested, or perceived by mediation thereof, are tangible ideas, which may be considered as secondary and improper objects of sight. We infer causes from effects, effects from causes, and properties one from another, where the connexion is necessary[1]. But how comes it to pass that we apprehend by the ideas of sight certain other ideas, which neither resemble them, nor cause them, nor are caused by them, nor have any necessary connexion with them?—the solution of this problem, in its full extent, doth comprehend the whole Theory of Vision. This stating of the matter placeth it on a new foot, and in a different light from all preceding theories.

43. To explain how the mind or soul of man simply sees is one thing, and belongs to Philosophy. To consider particles as moving in certain lines, rays of light as refracted or reflected, or crossing, or including angles, is quite another thing, and appertaineth to Geometry. To account for the sense of vision by the mechanism of the eye is a third thing, which appertaineth to Anatomy and experiments. These two latter speculations are of use in practice, to assist the defects and remedy the distempers of sight, agreeably to the natural laws contained in this mundane system. But the former Theory is that which makes us understand the true nature of Vision, considered as a faculty of the soul. Which Theory, as I have already observed, may be reduced to this simple question, to wit, How comes it to pass that a set of ideas, altogether different from tangible ideas, should nevertheless suggest

[1] The Theory of Vision is thus confined to the two elements of *immediate perception* (of the data peculiar to sight); and *suggestion in imagination* (of data peculiar to touch), erroneously supposed to involve perception of absolutely necessary relations, as distinguished from the apparently arbitrary or contingent relations. *Judgment* and *inference* are assigned to the Understanding, conversant with necessary truth, and not with 'arbitrary' connexion, either in the subjective imagination of individual men, or in that objective Providence of God by which sense-experience, and consequently scientific prevision, is determined.

them to us, there being no necessary connexion between them? To which the proper answer is, *That this is done in virtue of an arbitrary connexion, instituted by the Author of Nature.*

44. The proper, immediate object of vision is light, in all its modes and variations, various colours in kind, in degree, in quantity; some lively, others faint; more of some and less of others; various in their bounds or limits; various in their order and situation. A blind man, when first made to see, might perceive these objects, in which there is an endless variety: but he would neither perceive nor imagine any resemblance or connexion between these visible objects and those perceived by feeling[1]. Lights, shades, and colours would suggest nothing to him about bodies, hard or soft, rough or smooth: nor would their quantities, limits, or order suggest to him geometrical figures, or extension, or situation, which they must do upon the received supposition, that these objects are common to sight and touch.

45. All the various sorts, combinations, quantities, degrees, and dispositions of light and colours, would, upon the first perception thereof, be considered in themselves only as a new set of sensations and ideas. As they are wholly new and unknown, a man born blind would not, at first sight, give them the names of things formerly known and perceived by his touch[2]. But, after some experience, he would perceive[3] their connexion with tangible things, and would, therefore, consider them as signs, and give them (as is usual in other cases) the same names with the things signified.

46. More and less, greater and smaller, extent, proportion, interval are all found in Time as in Space; but it will not therefore follow that these are homogeneous quantities. No more will it follow, from the attribution of common names, that visible ideas are homogeneous with those of feeling. It is true that terms denoting tangible extension, figure, location, motion, and the like,

[1] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 41 and 106.]—AUTHOR.

[2] Cf. *Essay on Vision*, sect. 41, and other passages in which the probable experience of the 'born blind,' when they first receive sight, is conjectured.

[3] i.e. perceive mediately, through suggestion.

are also applied to denote the quantity, relation, and order of the proper visible objects, or ideas of sight. But this proceeds only from experience and analogy. There is a *higher* and *lower* in the notes of music; men speak in a high or a low key. And this, it is plain, is no more than metaphor or analogy. So likewise, to express the order of visible ideas, the words *situation*, *high* and *low*, *up* and *down*, are made use of; and their sense, when so applied, is analogical.

47. But, in the case of Vision we do not rest in a supposed analogy between different and heterogeneous natures. We suppose an identity of nature, or one and the same object common to both senses. And this mistake we are led into; forasmuch as the various motions of the head, upward and downward, to the right and to the left, being attended with a diversity in the visible ideas, it cometh to pass that those motions and situations of the head, which in truth are tangible, do confer their own attributes and appellations on visible ideas wherewith they are connected, and which by that means come to be termed *high* and *low*, *right* and *left*, and to be marked by other names betokening the modes of position; which, antecedently to such experienced connexion, would not have been attributed to them, at least not in the primary and literal sense [1].

48. From hence we may see how the mind is enabled to discern by Sight the Situation of distant objects [2]. Those immediate objects whose mutual respect and order come to be expressed by terms relative to tangible place, being connected with the real objects of touch, what we say and judge of the one, we say and judge of the other, transferring our thought or apprehension from the signs to the things signified; as it is usual, in hearing or reading a discourse, to overlook the sounds or letters, and instantly pass on to the meaning [3].

49. But there is a great difficulty relating to the situation of objects, as perceived by sight. For, since the

[1] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 99.]—AUTHOR.

[2] Sect. 48–53 treat of our visual discernment of Situation by suggestion, and may be compared with sect. 88–119 in the *Essay on Vision*.

[3] [*Minute Philosopher*, Dial. IV. sect. 12.]—AUTHOR.

pencils of rays issuing from any luminous object do, after their passage through the pupil, and their refraction by the crystalline, delineate inverted pictures in the *retina*, which pictures are supposed the immediate proper objects of sight, how comes it to pass that the objects whereof the pictures are thus inverted do yet seem erect and in their natural situation? For, the objects not being perceived otherwise than by their pictures, it should follow that, as these are inverted, those should seem so too. But this difficulty, which is inexplicable on all the received principles and theories, admits of a most natural solution, if it be considered that the *retina*, crystalline, pupil, rays, crossing refracted, and reunited in distinct images, correspondent and similar to the outward objects, are things altogether of a *tangible* nature.

50. The pictures, so called, being formed by the radious pencils, after their above-mentioned crossing and refraction, are not so truly pictures as images, or figures, or projections — tangible figures projected by tangible rays on a tangible *retina*, which are so far from being the proper objects of sight that they are not at all perceived thereby, being by nature altogether of the tangible kind, and apprehended by the Imagination alone, when we suppose them actually taken in by the eye. These tangible images on the *retina* have some resemblance unto the tangible objects from which the rays go forth; and in respect of those objects I grant they are inverted. But then I deny that they are, or can be, the proper immediate objects of sight. This, indeed, is vulgarly supposed by the writers of Optics: but it is a vulgar error; which being removed, the forementioned difficulty is removed with it, and admits a just and full solution, being shewn to arise from a mistake.

51. Pictures, therefore, may be understood in a twofold sense, or as two kinds quite dissimilar and heterogeneous — the one consisting of light, shade, and colours; the other not properly pictures, but images projected on the *retina*. Accordingly, for distinction, I shall call those *pictures*, and these *images*. The former are visible, and the peculiar objects of sight. The latter are so far otherwise, that a man blind from his birth may perfectly imagine, understand, and comprehend them. And here it may not be amiss to observe that figures and motions which cannot

be actually felt by us, but only imagined, may nevertheless be esteemed tangible ideas; forasmuch as they are of the same kind with the objects of touch, and as the imagination drew them from that sense.

52. Throughout this whole affair the mind is wonderfully apt to be deluded by the sudden suggestions of Fancy, which it confounds with the Perceptions of Sense, and is prone to mistake a close and habitual connexion between the most distinct and different things for an identity of nature[1]. The solution of this knot about inverted images seems the principal point in the whole Optic Theory; the most difficult perhaps to comprehend, but the most deserving of our attention, and, when rightly understood, the surest way to lead the mind into a thorough knowledge of the true nature of Vision.

53. It is to be noted of these inverted images on the *retina* that, although they are in kind altogether different from the proper objects of sight or pictures, they may nevertheless be proportional to them; as indeed the most different and heterogeneous things in nature may, for all that, have analogy, and be proportional each to other. And although those images, when the distance is given, should be simply as the radiating surfaces; and although it be consequently allowed that the pictures are in that case proportional to those radiating surfaces, or the tangible real magnitude of things; yet it will not thence follow that in common sight we perceive or judge of those tangible real magnitudes simply by the visible magnitudes of the pictures; for, therein the distance is not given, tangible objects being placed at various distances; and the diameters of the images, to which images the pictures are proportional, are inversely as those distances, which distances are not immediately perceived by sight[2]. And, admitting they were, it is nevertheless certain that the mind, in apprehending the magnitudes of tangible objects of sight, doth not compute them by means of the inverse proportion of the distances, and the direct proportion of the pictures. That no such inference

[1] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 144.]—AUTHOR. The so-called 'images,' or concurrent rays on the retina, are merely organic conditions of visual perception in our present embodied state.

[2] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 2.]—AUTHOR.

or reasoning attends the common act of seeing, every one's experience may inform him.

54. To know how we perceive or apprehend by sight the real Magnitude[1] of tangible objects, we must consider the immediate visible objects, and their properties or accidents. These immediate objects are the pictures. These pictures are some more lively, others more faint. Some are higher, others are lower in their own order or peculiar location; which, though in truth quite distinct, and altogether different from that of tangible objects, hath nevertheless a relation and connexion with it, and thence comes to be signified by the same terms, *high*, *low*, and so forth. Now, by the greatness of the pictures, their faintness and their situation, we perceive the magnitude of tangible objects — the greater, the fainter, and the upper pictures suggesting the greater tangible magnitude.

55. For better explication of this point, we may suppose a diaphanous plain erected near the eye, perpendicular to the horizon, and divided into small equal squares. A straight line from the eye to the utmost limit of the horizon, passing through this diaphanous plain, will mark a certain point or height to which the horizontal plain, as projected or represented in the perpendicular plain, would rise. The eye sees all the parts and objects in the horizontal plain, through certain corresponding squares of the perpendicular diaphanous plain. Those that occupy most squares have a greater visible extension, which is proportional to the squares. But the tangible magnitudes of objects are not judged proportional thereto. For those that are seen through the upper squares shall appear vastly bigger than those seen through the lower squares, though occupying the same, or a much greater number of those equal squares in the diaphanous plain.

56. Rays issuing from every point of each part or object in the horizontal plain, through the diaphanous plain to the eye, do to the imagination exhibit an image of the horizontal plain and all its parts, delineated in the dia-

[1] Sect. 54–61 treat of the (mediate) visual perception of Magnitude. Cf. sect. 52–87 in the *Essay*. There is a record of relative experiments by Wheatstone, in the *Philosophical Transactions* (1852).

phanous plain, and occupying the squares thereof to a certain height marked out by a right line reaching from the eye to the farthest limit of the horizon. A line drawn through the foremost height or mark, upon the diaphanous plain, and parallel to the horizon, I call the horizontal line. Every square contains an image of some corresponding part of the horizontal plain. And this entire image we may call the horizontal image, and the picture answering to it the horizontal picture. In which representation, the upper images suggest much greater magnitudes than the lower. And these images suggesting the greater magnitudes are also fainter as well as upper. Whence it follows that faintness and situation concur with visible magnitude to suggest tangible magnitude. For the truth of all which I appeal to the experience and attention of the reader who shall add his own reflexion to what I have written.

57. It is true this diaphanous plain, and the images supposed to be projected thereon, are altogether of a tangible nature [1]. But then there are pictures relative to those images [2]; and those pictures have an order among themselves, answering to the situation of the images, in respect of which order they are said to be higher and lower [3]. These pictures also are more or less faint; they, and not the images, being in truth the visible objects. Therefore, what hath been said of the images must in strictness be understood of the corresponding pictures, whose faintness, situation, and magnitude, being immediately perceived by sight, do all three concur in suggesting the magnitude of tangible objects, and this only by an experienced connexion.

58. The magnitude of the picture will perhaps be thought by some to have a *necessary* connexion with that of the tangible object, or (if not confounded with it) to be at least the sole means of suggesting it. But so far is this from being true, that of two visible pictures, equally large, the one, being fainter and upper, shall suggest an hundred times greater tangible magnitude than the other [4]; which is an evident proof that we do not judge of the

[1] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 158.]—AUTHOR.

[2] Cf. sect. 49–51, for the distinction intended between *pictures* and *images*.

[3] [*Supra*, sect. 46.]—AUTHOR.

[4] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 78.]—AUTHOR.

tangible magnitude merely by the visible, but that our judgment or apprehension is to be rated rather by other things, which yet, not being conceived to have so much resemblance with tangible magnitude, may therefore be overlooked.

59. It is farther to be observed that, beside this magnitude, situation, and faintness of the pictures, our prænotions concerning the kind, size, shape, and nature of things do concur in suggesting to us their tangible magnitudes. Thus, for instance, a picture equally great, equally faint, and in the very same situation, shall in the shape of a man suggest a lesser magnitude than it would in the shape of a tower.

60. Where the kind, faintness, and situation of the horizontal pictures[1] are given, the suggested tangible magnitude will be as the visible. The distances and magnitudes that we have been accustomed to measure by experience of touch, lying in the horizontal plain, it thence comes to pass that situations of the horizontal pictures suggest the tangible magnitudes, which are not in like manner suggested by vertical pictures. And it is to be noted that, as an object gradually ascends from the horizon towards the zenith, our judgment concerning its tangible magnitude comes by degrees to depend more entirely on its visible magnitude. For the faintness is lessened as the quantity of intercepted air and vapours is diminished. And as the object riseth the eye of the spectator is also raised above the horizon: so that the two concurring circumstances, of faintness and horizontal situation, ceasing to influence the suggestion of tangible magnitudes, this same suggestion or judgment doth, in proportion thereto, become the sole effect of the visible magnitude and the prænotions. But it is evident that if several things (for instance, the faintness, situation, and visible magnitude) concur to enlarge an idea, upon the gradual omission of some of those things, the idea will be gradually lessened. This is the case of the moon[2], when she ascends above the horizon, and gradually diminisheth her apparent dimension, as her altitude increaseth.

61. It is natural for mathematicians to regard the visual

[1] [*Supra*, sect. 56.]—AUTHOR.
[2] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 73.]—AUTHOR.

angle and the apparent magnitude as the sole or principal means of our apprehending the tangible magnitude of objects. But it is plain from what hath been premised, that our apprehension is much influenced by other things, which have no similitude or necessary connexion therewith [1].

62. And these same means which suggest the magnitude of tangible things do also suggest their Distance [2]; and in the same manner, that is to say, by experience alone, and not by any necessary connexion or geometrical inference. The faintness, therefore, and vividness, the upper and lower situations, together with the visible size of the pictures, and our prænotions concerning the shape and kind of tangible objects, are the true medium by which we apprehend the various degrees of tangible distance. Which follows from what hath been premised, and will indeed be evident to whoever considers that those visual angles, with their arches or subtenses, are neither perceived by sight, nor by experience of any other sense. Whereas it is certain that the pictures, with their magnitudes, situations, and degrees of faintness, are alone the proper objects of sight; so that whatever is perceived [3] by sight, must be perceived by means thereof. To which perception the prænotions also, gained by experience of touch, or of sight and touch conjointly, do contribute.

63. And indeed we need only reflect on what we see to be assured that the less the pictures are, the fainter they are, and the higher (provided still they are beneath the horizontal [4] line or its picture), by so much the greater will the distance seem to be. And this upper situation of the picture is in strictness what must be understood when, after a popular manner of speech, the eye is said to *perceive* fields, lakes, and the like, interjacent [5] between it and the distant object, the pictures corresponding to

[1] [*Supra*, sect. 58.]—AUTHOR.

[2] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 77.]—AUTHOR. Sect. 77 refers to Distance in connexion with Magnitude. The invisibility of real distance, and visual suggestion of the distances of things are treated in sect. 2–51 of the *Essay on Vision*.

[3] i.e. perceived by sight *mediately*, or through suggesting signs.

[4] [*Supra*, sect. 56.]—AUTHOR.

[5] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 3.]—AUTHOR.

them being only perceived to be lower than that of the object[1]. Now, it is evident that none of these things have in their own nature any *necessary* connexion with the various degrees of distance. It will also appear, upon a little reflexion, that sundry circumstances of shape, colour, and kind, do influence our judgments or apprehensions of distance; all which follows from our prænotions, which are merely the effect of experience.

64. As it is natural for mathematicians to reduce things to the rule and measure of geometry, they are prone to suppose that the apparent magnitude hath a greater share than we really find, in forming our judgment concerning the distance of things from the eye. And, no doubt, it would be an easy and ready rule to determine the apparent place of an object, if we could say that its distance was inversely as the diameter of its apparent magnitude, and so judge by this alone, exclusive of every other circumstance. But that this would be no true rule is evident, there being certain cases in vision, by refracted or reflected light, wherein the diminution of the apparent magnitude is attended with an apparent diminution of distance.

65. But further to satisfy us that our judgments or apprehensions, either of the greatness or distance of an object, do not depend absolutely on the apparent magnitude, we need only ask the first painter we meet, who, considering Nature rather than Geometry, well knows that several other circumstances contribute thereto: and, since art can only deceive us as it imitates nature, we need but observe pieces of perspective and landscapes to be able to judge of this point.

66. When the object is so near that the interval between the pupils beareth some sensible proportion to it, the sensation which attends the turning or straining of the eyes, in order to unite the two optic axes therein, is to be considered as one means of our perceiving distance[2]. It must be owned, this sensation belongeth properly to the sense of feeling; but, as it waits upon and hath a regular connexion with distinct vision of near distance (the nearer this, the greater that), so it is natural that it should become

[1] [*Supra*, sect. 55.]—AUTHOR.
[2] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 16, 17.]—AUTHOR.

a sign thereof, and suggest it to the mind[1]. And that it is so in fact follows from that known experiment of hanging up a ring edge-wise to the eyes, and then endeavouring, with one eye shut, by a lateral motion, to insert into it the end of a stick; which is found more difficult to perform than with both eyes open; from the want of this means of judging by the sensation attending the nearer meeting or crossing of the two optic axes.

67. True it is that the mind of man is pleased to observe in nature rules or methods, simple, uniform, general, and reducible to mathematics, as a means of rendering its knowledge at once easy and extensive. But we must not, for the sake of uniformities or analogies, depart from truth and fact, nor imagine that in all cases the apparent place or distance of an object must be suggested by the same means. And, indeed, it answers the end of vision to suppose that the mind should have certain additional means or helps, for judging more accurately of the distance of those objects which are the nearest, and consequently most concern us.

68. It is also to be observed that when the distance is so small that the breadth of the pupil bears a considerable proportion to it, the object appears confused. And this confusion being constantly observed in poring on such near objects, and increasing as the distance lessens, becomes thereby a means of suggesting the place of an object[2]. For, one idea is qualified to suggest another, merely by being often perceived with it. And, if the one increaseth either directly or inversely as the other, various degrees of the former will suggest various degrees of the latter, by virtue of such habitual connexion, and proportional increase or diminution. And thus the gradual changing confusedness of an object may concur to form our apprehension of near distance, when we look only with one eye. And this alone may explain Dr. Barrow's difficulty, the case as proposed by him regarding only one visible point[3]. And when several points are considered, or the image supposed an extended surface, its increasing confusedness will, in that case, concur with the increasing

[1] [*Supra*, sect. 39.]—AUTHOR.
[2] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 21.]—AUTHOR.
[3] [*Theory of Vision*, sect. 29.]—AUTHOR.

magnitude to diminish its distance, which will be inversely as both.

69. Our experience in Vision is got by the naked eye. We apprehend or judge from this same experience when we look through glasses. We may not, nevertheless, in all cases, conclude from the one to the other; because that certain circumstances, either excluded or added, by the help of glasses, may sometimes alter our judgments, particularly as they depend upon prænotions.

70. What I have here written may serve as a commentary on my *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*; and, I believe, will make it plain to thinking men. In an age wherein we hear so much of thinking and reasoning, it may seem needless to observe, how useful and necessary it is to think, in order to obtain just and accurate notions, to distinguish things that are different, to speak consistently, to know even our own meaning. And yet, for want of this, we may see many, even in these days, run into perpetual blunders and paralogisms. No friend, therefore, to truth and knowledge would lay any restraint or discouragement on thinking. There are, it must be owned, certain general maxims, the result of ages, and the collected sense of thinking persons, which serve instead of thinking for a guide or rule to the multitude, who, not caring to think for themselves, it is fit they should be conducted by the thoughts of others. But those who set up for themselves, those who depart from the public rule, or those who would reduce them to it, if they do not think, what will men think of them? As I pretend not to make any discoveries which another might not as well have made who should have thought it worth his pains: so I must needs say that without pains and thought no man will ever understand the true nature of Vision, or comprehend what I have wrote concerning it.

71. Before I conclude, it may not be amiss to add the following extract from the *Philosophical Transactions*, relating to a person blind from his infancy, and long after made to see[1]:—'When he first saw, he was so far from

[1] This is Berkeley's principal reference to results of experiment, as distinguished from inward consciousness, in verification of his

making any judgment about distances that he thought all objects whatever touched his eyes (as he expressed it) as what he felt did his skin, and thought no objects so agreeable as those which were smooth and regular, though he could form no judgment of their shape, or guess what it was in any object that was pleasing to him. He knew not the shape of anything, nor any one thing from another, how different in shape or magnitude: but upon being told what things were, whose form he before knew from Feeling, he would carefully observe them that he might know them again; but having too many objects to learn at once, he forgot many of them; and (as he said) at first he learned to know, and again forgot, a thousand things in a day. Several weeks after he was couched, being deceived by pictures, he asked which was the lying sense—Feeling or Seeing? He was never able to imagine any lines beyond the bounds he saw. The room he was in, he said, he knew to be part of the house, yet he could not conceive that the whole house could look bigger. He said every new object was a new delight, and the pleasure was so great that he wanted ways to express it[1].'—Thus, by fact

conclusion, that what is called *seeing* is really interpreting the prophetic language of Nature that is continuously presented to our sight by God.

[1] [*Philosophical Transactions*, No. 402.]—AUTHOR. This is Berkeley's only allusion to the experiment of Chesselden, recorded in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1728. As this once celebrated case is imperfectly presented in the text, I here reprint the Communication as it appears in the *Philosophical Transactions*, along with some references to more recent cases of the experience of born-blind persons when they began to see:—

'*An account of some observations made by a young gentleman, who was born blind, or who lost his sight so early, that he had no remembrance of ever having seen, and was couched between* 13 *and* 14 *years of age.* By Mr. Will. Chesselden, F.R.S., Surgeon to Her Majesty, and to St. Thomas's Hospital.

'Tho' we say of the gentleman that he was blind, as we do of all people who have ripe cataracts, yet they are never so blind from that cause but that they can discern day from night; and for the most part in a strong light distinguish black, white, and scarlet; but they cannot perceive the shape of anything;—for the light by which these perceptions are made, being let in obliquely through the aqueous humour, or the anterior surface of the chrystalline (by which the rays cannot be brought into a focus upon the retina), they can discern in no other manner, than a sound eye can thro' a glass of broken jelly, where a great variety of surfaces so differently refract the light that the several

and experiment, those points of the theory which seem the most remote from common apprehension were not

distinct pencils of rays cannot be collected by the eye into their proper foci; wherefore the shape of an object in such a case, cannot be at all discern'd, tho' the colour may. And thus it was with this young gentleman, who though he knew these colours asunder in a good light, yet when he saw them after he was couch'd, the faint ideas he had of them before were not sufficient for him to know them by afterwards; and therefore he did not think them the same, which he had before known by those names. Now scarlet he thought the most beautiful of all colours, and of others the most gay were the most pleasing, whereas the first time he saw black, it gave him great uneasiness, yet after a little time he was reconcil'd to it; but some months after, seeing by accident a Negroe woman, he was struck with great horror at the sight.

'When he first saw, he was so far from making any judgment about distances, that he thought all objects whatever touched his eyes (as he express'd it) as what he felt did his skin; and thought no objects so agreeable as those which were smooth and regular, tho' he could form no judgment of their shape, or guess what it was in any object that was pleasing to him: he knew not the shape of anything, nor any one thing from another, however different in shape or magnitude; but upon being told what things were, whose form he knew before from feeling, he would carefully observe, that he might know them again; but, having too many objects to learn at once, he forgot many of them; and (as he said) at first he learn'd to know, and again forgot a thousand things in a day. One particular only (tho' it may appear trifling) I will relate:—having forgot which was the cat and which the dog, he was asham'd to ask; but catching the cat (which he knew by feeling) he was observ'd to look at her steadfastly, and then setting her down, said, "So, Puss! I shall know you another time." He was very much surpris'd that those things which he had lik'd best did not appear most agreeable to his eyes, expecting those persons would appear most beautiful that he lov'd most, and such things to be most agreeable to his sight that were so to his taste. We thought he soon knew what pictures represented which were shew'd to him, but we found afterwards we were mistaken; for about two months after he was couch'd, he discovered at once, they represented solid bodies; when to that time he consider'd them only as party-colour'd planes or surfaces diversified with variety of paint; but even then he was no less surpris'd, expecting the pictures would feel like the things they represented, and was amaz'd when he found those parts, which by their light and shadow appear'd now round and uneven, felt only flat like the rest; and ask'd which was the lying sense,—feeling or seeing?

'Being shewn his father's picture in a locket at his mother's watch, and told what it was, he acknowledged a likeness, but was vastly surpris'd; asking how it could be that a large face could be express'd in so little room, saying, it should have seem'd as impossible to him as to put a bushel of anything into a pint.

'At first he could bear but very little sight, and the things he saw he thought extreamly large; but upon seeing things larger, those first

a little confirmed, many years after I had been led into the discovery of them by reasoning.

seen he conceiv'd less, never being able to imagine any lines beyond the bounds he saw; the room he was in, he said, he knew to be but part of the house, yet he could not conceive that the whole house could look bigger. Before he was couch'd he expected little advantage from seeing, worth undergoing an operation for, except reading and writing; for he said he thought he could have no more pleasure in walking abroad than he had in the garden, which he could do safely and readily. And even blindness, he observ'd, had this advantage, that he could go anywhere in the dark much better than those who can see; and after he had seen, he did not soon lose this quality, nor desire a light to go about the house in the night. He said every new object was a new delight, and the pleasure was so great that he wanted ways to express it; but his gratitude to his operator he could not conceal, never seeing him for some time without tears of joy in his eyes, and other marks of affection: and if he did not happen to come at any time when he was expected, he would be so griev'd that he could not forbear crying at his disappointment. A year after first seeing, being carried upon Epsom Downs, and observing a large prospect, he was exceedingly delighted with it, and called it a new kind of seeing. And now being lately couch'd of his other eye, he says that objects at first appeared large to this eye, but not so large as they did at first to the other; and looking upon the same object with both eyes, he thought it look'd about twice as large as with the first couch'd eye only, but not double, that we can anyways discover.'

No very satisfactory inference can be drawn from a narrative so deficient in the refinement of thought and expression which the subject requires. The question is too subtle for experiments conducted in this fashion. Nor can much be said in favour of a succession of somewhat similar experiments recorded in the *Philosophical Transactions*. The more important are the following :—

1. Case described by Mr. Ware, Surgeon, in the *Philos. Trans.* (1801).
2. Two cases described by Mr. Home, in the *Philos. Trans.* (1807).
3. Case of the lady described by Mr. Wardrop, Surgeon, in the *Philos. Trans.* (1826).

To these may be added Dugald Stewart's 'Account of James Mitchell, a boy born deaf and blind,' in the seventh volume of the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*. See Hamilton's edition of Stewart's Works, vol. III. Appendix, pp. 300–370; also p. 388.

I have quoted one of the earliest described cases—that of Chesselden. I end by giving the following, one of the last and best described of any I have met with. It is contained in Mr. Nunneley's treatise on *The Organs of Vision: their Anatomy and Physiology* (1858) :—

'The case was that of a fine and most intelligent boy, nine years of age, who had congenital cataract of both eyes, in whom the retina was more perfect than it commonly is at so advanced an age, as shewn by the excellent sight he subsequently acquired. He had always lived in a very large manufacturing

village, about sixteen miles from Leeds. He could find his way all about this place. Walking along the middle of the road, when he heard any object approaching, he at once stopped, groped his way to the side of the road, and remained perfectly still until it had passed. Any one whom he knew he was able to recognise by the sound of the voice, and by passing his hands over the face and body of the person. He could perceive the difference between a bright, sunny, and a dark, cloudy day, and could follow the motions of a candle without discerning what it was. He had been sent to school for some time, and by means of models and a raised alphabet, could by touch alone arrange the different letters into short words. I presented to him in succession a great number of different objects, each one of which he took into both hands, felt it most carefully over with both, then with equal minuteness with one, turning the object over and over again, in every direction; the tongue was next applied to it; and lastly, he applied it so near to the eye as to touch the eyelids, when he pronounced his opinion upon it, and generally with correctness, as to the nature and form of the object, when these were distinct. Thus he recognised books, stones, small boxes, pieces of wood and bone of different shapes, a broken piece of hard biscuit. A cube and a sphere he could readily recognise, saying the one was square and the other round, and that both were made of wood; but a sphere which was made of perfectly smooth, hard wood, he was very confident was bone. In an object where the angles were not very distinct, he made constant mistakes in the shape, first saying that it was square, then that it was round. Very bright light colours, when touching the eyelids, he could at once recognise, calling them all white; all dull and dark colours he said were black. Between a thin circle of wood and a sphere or a cube he instantly decided by the hand alone. On putting half-a-crown piece into his hands he immediately said it was money, but for long was undecided whether it was half-a-crown or a penny; however, after carefully turning it over for some time, so as frequently to bring every part into contact with the hand, then putting it to the tongue, and afterwards so close to the eye that it touched the eyeball itself, he said decidedly, "It is half-a-crown."

'The lenses were very large, milky, with caseous particles, quite white and opaque, the capsules being clear and transparent. As is well known, in most cases, before this period of life, the lens itself has been absorbed, leaving only a leathery, opaque capsule, and, of course, not nearly so favourable for such observations as this one. After keeping him in a dark room for a few days, until the opaque particles of lenses were nearly absorbed, and the eyes clear, the same objects, which had been kept carefully from him, were again presented to his notice. He could at once perceive a difference in their shapes; though he could not in the least say which was the cube and which the sphere, he saw they were not of the same figure. It was not until they had many times been placed in his hands that he learnt to distinguish by the eye the one which he had just had in his hands, from the other placed beside it. He gradually became more correct in his perception, but it was only after several days that he could or would tell by the eyes alone, which was the sphere and which the cube; when asked, he

always, before answering, wished to take both into his hands; even when this was allowed, when immediately afterwards the objects were placed before the eyes, he was not certain of the figure. Of distance he had not the least conception. He said everything touched his eyes, and walked most carefully about, with his hands held out before him, to prevent things hurting his eyes by touching them. Great care was requisite to prevent him falling over objects, or walking against them. Improvement gradually went on, and his subsequent sight was, and now is comparatively perfect.'

None of these experiments, taken by themselves, unequivocally determine the question—Whether the power of interpreting the visual signs of real or tangible extension is inspired instinct, or is acquired by association, or by constructive activity of intellect. But they confirm the conclusion, that visible signs are not less indispensable to our imagination of trinal extension than verbal signs are necessary to abstract thought and reasoning. They shew that the born-blind have only a vague perception of an external world. Moreover, when once we are experimentally acquainted with distances, mathematical analysis of the perspective lines leading from an object to the eye is possible, with an involved sense of necessity, which seems to presuppose relations of reason common to the visible signs and the felt reality. The difficulty which confronts Berkeley is, that on the empirical foundation of his juvenile theory space and its mathematical relations are relative to sensations which, *per se*, are contingent and thus wanting in the element which gives absolute stability to mathematical science.

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